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BY THE

REV. W. LUCAS COLLINS, M.A.

AUTHOR OF

'ETONIANA,' 'THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS,' ETC.

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NOTE.

THE chapter on the Plague at Athens has had the advantage of revision by the writer's friend, Dr W. A. Greenhill.

The translations are all original; but a word or phrase has sometimes been gladly adopted from Mr Dale's version, and from Mr Wilkins's paraphrase of the speeches.

W. L. C.

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THUCYDIDES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

It has been remarked already, in one of the earlier volumes of this series, that when we use the word "ancient" of the Greek and Roman writers, we are employing a term which, from one point of view, has a very unequal application. It is not altogether a question of date which makes a writer ancient or modern. It is the position which he occupies in the cycle of the national literature, if his country has ever reached a high pitch of civilisation, which marks his thoughts and diction as recent or archaic. Our Anglo-Saxon historians and the Arthurian romances are in this sense far more ancient than Horace or Cicero. "There is, in fact," says Dr Arnold, "an ancient and a modern period in the history of every people: the ancient differing, and the modern in many essential points agreeing with, that in which we now live. Thus the largest portion of that history which we commonly call ancient is

practically modern, as it describes society in a stage analogous to that in which it now is; while on the other hand, much of what is called modern history is practically ancient, as it relates to a state of things which has passed away. Thucydides and Xenophon, the orators of Athens, and the philosophers, speak a wisdom more applicable to us politically than the wisdom of even our own countrymen who lived in the middle ages; and their position, both intellectual and political, more nearly resembles our own." More than this, there are cases in the literature of the same people, in which a single generation marks the step from the old to the new. Herodotus and Thucydides were almost contemporaries: between the probable dates of their birth there was an interval of scarcely thirteen years. But the distance between them, as writers of history, is not to be measured by a chronological table. In Herodotus we have the ancient chronicler, with all his charms and with all his defects. He is at once story-teller, geographer, antiquarian, and traveller; at times he seems to assume the licence allowed to story-tellers, and attributed somewhat unfairly to travellers, of preferring the picturesque and the marvellous to the baldness of fact. But we have to remember that the readers (or, perhaps, to speak more correctly, the hearers) of his day looked for this kind of intellectual entertainment, and had a far more ready appreciation of the legend which magnified the national heroes, and the tale which described the wonders of strange lands and peoples, than of the painful accuracy of impartial history.

When we turn from the pages of Herodotus to those of Thucydides, the change is wonderful. The latter writer is fully conscious of it himself; he feels that he is the teacher of a new school. The progress of thought in Greece during a single generation had been greater perhaps than ever before or since. Philosophy, rhetoric, and the drama, had all made vast and rapid strides. And with Thucydides, history, properly so called, began. He treats his predecessors in this line with even scantier courtesy than is usual in such cases. He classes the "story-writer"—there was no word as yet for "historian"—with the poet, as both equally mythical and untrustworthy. He speaks of the "wonderfully small amount of pains with which the investigation of the truth is pursued by most men, who commonly avail themselves of what they find ready to their hand." "Men accept from one another the current report of past events, without putting them to the test of examination, even when they have taken place in their own country." * His own method, he assures his readers, shall be something very different indeed. We might well be inclined to smile at the confident self-assertion of the following language, if we did not know that the promise was largely justified by the performance:—

"If, from the evidence here advanced, the reader should conclude that the course of events was on the whole as I have traced it, he would not be far wrong; instead of trusting rather to what poets have sung about

* I. 20.

them, dressing them out to make them grander than they were, or to what the chroniclers have put together, rather with a view to make their tale pleasant to the ear than accurate in its facts; bearing in mind that such matters cannot be subjected to strict examination, inasmuch as most of them through lapse of time have won their way into the region of fable so as to lose all credit; but holding that they have been traced with sufficient accuracy, allowing for their antiquity, from the best data at our command. And though men always think the war of their own times the most important, so long as they are engaged in it, but when it is over bestow their admiration rather on the wars of the past; still, the war of which I write, if we contemplate its operations and results, will appear the most important of any.

"Now, as to the language used by the several speakers, either when they were preparing for the war or were actually engaged in it, it would have been difficult for me, as to what I heard in person, or for other parties who reported to me from various quarters, to record exactly what was said. But I have set down what each seemed likely to have said as most to the purpose under the circumstances, while adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of the words used. But as to the actions of the war, I have not been content to report them on the authority of any chance informant, or from my own conception of them; but either from personal knowledge where I was present, or after the most careful investigation possible in every case where I gained my information from others. Very

laborious were these inquiries; since those who were present in the several actions did not all give the same account of the same affair, but as they were swayed by favour to one side or the other, or as their memory served them. Possibly this avoidance of any fabulous embellishment may make my work less entertaining; but I shall be well content if those shall pronounce my history useful, who desire to gain a view of events as they really did happen, and as they are very likely, in accordance with human nature, to repeat themselves at some future time,—if not in exactly the same, yet in very similar fashion. And it is designed rather as a possession for ever than as a mere prize composition to be listened to for the moment."—(I. 21, 22.)

The claim which the writer makes on behalf of his great work, boastful as it might seem, rested on a consciousness of power. He did but anticipate the calm judgment of posterity. Lord Lytton has called it "the eternal manual of statesmen," and the great Earl of Chatham insisted on it as the one Greek book with which, whatever else might be neglected, his son must make himself familiar. Macaulay, who read and re-read it while he was writing his own great history, pronounces the author to be, "on the whole, the first of historians:" and his biographer tells us that "the sense of his own inferiority to Thucydides did more to put him out of conceit with himself than all the unfavourable comments bestowed upon him by the newspapers and reviews."* The 'History' of Thucy-

* Life and Letters, ii. 237.

dides is indeed one of those "possessions for ever" in the great storehouse of literature which has never lost its value. It may be doubted whether even the critical Athenian audience who first heard his manuscript read, were as much impressed by the genius of the author as the world of modern scholars is now, after the lapse of above two thousand years.

It is time to inquire who this great writer was, whose own confidence as to his future rank amongst historians was so largely justified. But here, as is so commonly the case with the early writers with whose names and works we are so familiar, the personality of the man himself escapes us. The days when every author, great or small, was to have his voluminous biography, had not yet come. Two so-called 'Lives' of Thucydides, of comparatively modern date, have come down to us; but they may both be referred to that class of "fabulous" narrative, "constructed to be pleasant," for which he had himself such keen contempt. This much only we can be said to know with any approach to accuracy as to his early life: that he was born about the year 471 B.C.; and that he was of Thracian descent (for his father's name, Olorus, is Thracian), though he was a citizen of Athens. We gather from his own pages that he possessed some hereditary property in gold-mines, in the district of Thrace known as Scapté-Hylé ("the excavated wood"), and that he saw considerable service himself as a divisional commander, in the great war of which he became the historian. He is said to have taken lessons in rhetoric, the popular study of the day, from Antiphon of Rhamnus, the inventor of oratory, as his

admirers termed him; and competent critics have traced a correspondence of idioms, which is at least curious, in the extant orations of the master when compared with the set speeches which the pupil introduces so freely into his narrative of the war. He was certainly one of the great orator's warm admirers, for he characterises the defence made by Antiphon, when accused of treason to the State, as the ablest on record. The young Thucydides is also said to have sat with Pericles at the feet of the great philosopher Anaxagoras, the boldest free-thinker of the day; and some hints occur here and there in his history of a contempt for the national superstitions, which are thought to savour of those unpopular opinions which led to Anaxagoras's fine and banishment. He was a sufferer —one of the few who completely recovered—from the great plague which almost depopulated Athens in the second year of the war, and of which he has left us such a full account.

The personal share which he took in the operations of the war, and his conduct as a general, will come before us in their proper place in the course of the history. His failure in the campaign in Thrace against Brasidas, whether it was his fault or only his misfortune, resulted in his banishment from Athens (or perhaps his voluntary exile to avoid a worse sentence) for twenty years. The locality of his exile is uncertain; probably he moved from place to place. Part of the time seems, from some of his own expressions, to have been passed in the Peloponnese, within the borders of his enemies the Spartans; and this gave him the opportunity of

judging the remaining operations of the war from the enemy's point of view. "It was my fate," he says, "to be an exile from my country for twenty years after the campaign against Amphipolis; and thus having been cognisant of the operations of both parties, and more especially of those of the Peloponnesians, by reason of my exile, I could calmly and at my leisure learn all I wanted about them." * Possibly this kind of neutral position which, as a banished man, the writer held between friend and foe, may have contributed to the impartiality as well as to the accuracy of his narrative. It was no doubt during that long period of enforced leisure that he digested the materials which, as appears from his own statement just quoted, he had already collected, and expanded his original notes (if we may use so modern a term) into a methodical history. But it was probably not completed in its present form until after his return from exile—when Athens had seen her Long Walls destroyed by the Spartans, and these successful rivals had wrested from her the leadership of Greece. Thucydides possibly returned with Thrasybulus when he freed Athens from the tyranny of the Thirty: certainly, from his own expressions, it was after the great war was ended. He is said to have met his death by assassination, either at Athens or in his own domain at Scapté-Hylé. His tomb, with the brief inscription in a single line of verse,—"Here lies Thucydides the son of Olorus, of Halimus,"—was for some time shown at Athens. His age at the time of his death is left uncertain—probably about seventy.

* V. 26.

He left his work unfinished, after all. Something like a fourth part of the period which he intended it to embrace is left untouched. We know it as the 'History of the Peloponnesian War;' but the author did not live even to give it a name. Of the eight "books" into which his early editors have divided it, the seventh is thought never to have received his final corrections—if indeed this does not apply in less degree to the preceding books as well—and the eighth is left imperfect. So imperfect, that ancient literary gossip asserted that the daughter had put it together from her father's notes; whilst in other quarters the authorship was assigned to Xenophon, who has carried on the history where this eighth book leaves it, in his 'Hellenics.' One remarkable point in which the last book, as we have it, differs from the others, is in the total absence of those rhetorical and argumentative speeches which form so important a feature in Thucydides's work. It seems very probable that in all cases the speeches were composed and inserted by the author after the body of the history had been completed, and therefore are not to be found in this last and incomplete portion. It has indeed been asserted that they were here purposely omitted by Thucydides, because the public had pronounced them to be tedious: but such a verdict would scarcely have been in accordance with Athenian taste. It is evident that Thucydides himself, supposing him to have possessed the physical qualifications, would have made a consummate orator. Demosthenes must have held him to have been a master in the art, if there be any truth in the tradition

that for his own improvement he had copied out the historian's great work no less than eight times.

It is somewhat remarkable that Thucydides nowhere mentions or alludes to—unless it be under cover of his general strictures on the writers of the past—his great predecessor Herodotus. A story is briefly referred to by Suidas of the boy Thucydides having been present when Herodotus read his history in public at the Olympian games, and that he shed tears of emulation, with the tacit resolve to follow in his steps. But modern criticism has gone so far as to doubt whether he ever read, or heard of, Herodotus's researches. His own death probably very soon followed that of the earlier historian.

Whence he drew his materials, independent of personal memoranda and verbal information from contemporaries, we can very imperfectly guess. The written authorities must have been few. He mentions only Hellanicus, and of him he has no high opinion. The text of existing treaties, some of which he gives at length, and the memoirs of Cimon and Pericles, would probably be his most trustworthy authorities. It is possible that he may have met with his fellow-exile Alcibiades, and gained personal information from him.

The only division which he has himself made of his work is not into 'books,' as we now have it, but into those periods into which the story of the great struggle between Athens and Sparta, which distracted all Greece for twenty-seven years, naturally falls: First, the ten years from the attack on Platæa by the Thebans (B.C. 431) to the "Peace of Nicias" (B.C. 421); secondly,

the next seven years of comparative suspension of hostilities; and lastly, the remaining period of the war—of which, however, he has left the last six years untouched. His work might perhaps be more fitly styled 'Annals' than 'History:' he gives the events of each year separately, dating them by the successive summers and winters. This plan spoils in some degree the effect of the narrative; the scene of operations is continually shifting; and he leaves a campaign or a siege at the very crisis of the interest, in order to bring up his arrears in other quarters. This arrangement has not been strictly adhered to in the following pages.

CHAPTER II.

PRELIMINARY HISTORY.

It will be best to let the historian open his subject in his own words. He gives us no laboured introduction, but announces his theme and purpose, and his motives for undertaking his task, with a dignified simplicity.

"Thucydides of Athens has written the story of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, how they warred with each other; having begun his record from the very outset, expecting it to prove an important war, and more worthy of relation than any that had been before it; forming this opinion both from the fact that both parties were perfectly equipped for it in every way, and seeing all the rest of Greece gathering to one side or the other, either by immediate action or by manifest intention. For this was the most important movement which had yet affected the Greeks, and indeed a large portion of the barbarian nations, and one might even say a great part of the world. For as to the wars which preceded this, and those of still earlier times, to ascertain the facts with any certainty seems impossible through lapse of time. But from such evidence as we have, so far as I am led to believe after

carrying my investigations as far back as possible, I do not think they could have been on a very extensive scale, either as to military operations or anything else."

He proceeds to give a brief summary of the early and half-mythical history of Greece—the first instance of an attempt to apply anything like critical examination to the mass of current legend. That the result should be quite satisfactory is not to be expected: that it should display so much of the true spirit of historical criticism is the wonder. If Thucydides accepts the story of the great Trojan war in all its essentials as an historical fact, he admits no more than all students of history have done until quite a modern date, and what many whose authority is by no means to be despised admit now. He holds that there was a great united expedition of Greeks, led by a real Agamemnon against a real Troy, and that this it was which first drew together the various tribes who occupied the Peloponnese and its neighbourhood, and gave them some kind of national cohesion. He even accepts the muster-roll of ships and men, as given in the Iliad, as an authentic record, and explains the length of the siege by the difficulty of maintaining so numerous a force without detaching a large portion to obtain supplies. But the importance of the expedition and of its operations has been magnified, he has no doubt, by the poets, and he considers it not worthy of comparison with the greater undertakings of later times.

The sketch which he gives of the ages before the Trojan expedition cannot be accepted as much more

than a clever guess, to be corrected by later investigations. It was impossible for him, as later historians with their greater advantages have found it, to sift with any very satisfactory result what Mommsen has happily termed "the rubbish-heap of tradition." He regards the Hellas, or Greece, of early times as overrun by migratory and restless tribes, who settled in such districts as they could conquer and hold, until driven out by a stronger people. They occupied, according to his view, rude hill-forts amongst the mountains, difficult of access, while they avoided the plain and the sea-shore, as liable at any moment to the attack of an enemy from land or sea. The most fertile lands—Bœotia, Thessaly, and the Peloponnese generally—were subject to the most frequent changes of inhabitants, because they held out stronger temptation to the invader: while Attica, with its poor and unproductive soil, was left in comparative quiet, and always in the occupation of the same people. Such, as is well known, was always the popular boast of the Athenians—that they were "sons of the soil." Hellen, the son of Deucalion, whence came the name of Hellenes—Pelops, the foreign chief who came from Asia and gave his name to the peninsula—and Minos, king of Crete, who established a navy, put down piracy, and colonised the islands, — are all treated as historical personages, though the distinctly fabulous elements of their story are passed over in silence. It is very possible that Thucydides, like the Roman historian Livy at a much later date, found the existing national belief in these rather mythical heroes too strong for him to

venture upon destructive criticism. To reject them altogether would have been to reject articles of the Greek faith. He may himself have retained a sort of half-conventional belief not only in their personality but in the legends with which it was surrounded.

It is from the return of the Greeks from the expedition to Troy that Thucydides would seem to date the historical annals of Greece. It was eighty years afterwards, according to his reckoning, that the great Dorian migration into the Peloponnese under the "sons of Hercules" took place: then Athens, the headquarters of the Ionian race, sent out her colonies, bearing their generic name, into the coasts and islands of the Archipelago, and so settled the district which went by the name of Ionia; while the Dorians from the Peloponnese threw off their companies of adventurers into Italy, Sicily, and the coasts of further Greece. Then came, as he considers, the advance of civilisation by the founding of navies—notably by the Corinthians, who by their position on the isthmus made their city the natural emporium of Greece; the increase of wealth, and the consequent rise of despotic governments, by the usurpation of some one powerful individual—"Tyrants," as the name went—in the several cities, instead of the old patriarchal and hereditary kings; until the great Dorian state of Sparta, or Lacedæmon, rising to a commanding position by reason of her long-established government, took upon her to vindicate the cause of liberty amongst her neighbours, and "put down the tyrants" in the several weaker states—Athens included. Then came the great Persian war, which

had already found its own historian in Herodotus, and on which his successor does not linger. But it was, as he notes, out of the results of this earlier war that the present, of which he is to write, had arisen. Lacedæmon had taken the lead in the second act of the Persian invasion (for the Athenians had abandoned their city at the Persians' approach), and she had thus become, from circumstances perhaps even more than from ambition, the chief of a kind of informal confederacy which embraced most of the Greek states. But Athens was as decidedly superior at sea as Lacedæmon was on land. Hence arose that bitter jealousy of each other—a jealousy strengthened by difference of race, of character, and of national habits—which led to a perpetual condition of hostilities more or less open between themselves and their several allies, from the final repulse of the Persians, B.C. 480, to the breaking out of the Peloponnesian war in 431.

Thucydides will presently give us what he notes as the actual causes of the rupture. But its roots lay deeper than any overt act. Lacedæmon had lost her supremacy over Greece and the islands; and Athens had won it. The history of this momentous change in the international relations of the several Greek states is reserved by our historian for a later page of his work;* but it will find its place more conveniently

* I. c. 89. "To follow the history in chronological order, a reader, after finishing Herodotus, should take up Thucydides at this 89th chapter, and read to the 117th inclusive: he should then go back to the 24th, and read on from thence to the 88th inclusive: after which he should proceed directly to the 118th." —Arnold.

here, when we are considering the remoter causes of the war.

When the Athenians had returned to their deserted city, they naturally proceeded to rebuild the fortifications which the enemy had destroyed. The Lacedæmonians were jealous. Walled towns, they said, were dangerous things: they might serve an enemy for a base of operations (as Thebes had in the late war), as well as protect their occupants; rather than rebuild their own walls, let the Athenians join in levelling the rest throughout Greece. But the leading man at Athens was still the Themistocles who had laid such stress upon the "wooden walls" in the first Persian invasion: and he was as determined upon retaining the stone walls now. Lacedæmon had no navy, but her infantry were the best in the world, and Athens was not to lie at their mercy—good friends as they seemed just now. He contrived that some months should be occupied in diplomatic messages to and fro: the Lacedæmonian commissioners were fêted and entertained at Athens, but on one pretence or other not allowed to return home with their report. Themistocles himself went as representative of Athens to Lacedæmon, and waited there—"expecting his colleagues," he said—until he heard that the walls were nearly completed. Then he appeared before the Lacedæmonian authorities, and told them plainly how matters stood:—

"Their city was now put in a sufficient state of defence, he said, to protect its occupants: and if the

Lacedæmonians or their allies had occasion to send any embassies there in future, let them understand that they were sending them to people who knew what was good for their own interests, as well as for the general interests of Greece. When it had seemed expedient to abandon their city and go aboard their ships, they had found the spirit to do so—without consulting their friends. And in whatever steps they had taken in concert with them, they had shown themselves to haye as much sense, they thought, as other people. And at this present time they held it best for their city to have a wall round it, and more to the advantage both of their own citizens and of the allies in general; for it was impossible to give an independent or straightforward vote in council for the public interests unless they stood on equal terms. Either all the confederate cities, then, ought to be unfortified, or they were bound to hold what the Athenians had done to be right."—(I. 91.)

Thucydides does not take upon himself in this place, as in so many others, to give us anything like the actual words of the speaker. He could not do so, of course, from any good authority—unless the speech had been recorded, which is improbable—for Themistocles was long before the writer's own day: and it may perhaps be some testimony to the general faithfulness of his reports of cotemporary speakers, that here he is content with giving us only the general sense. We miss a good deal by not having the shrewdness and irony of the speaker more elaborately conveyed to us in the polished phrases of Thucydides. Need we

wonder that the Lacedæmonians, though "they did not give vent to their wrath against Athens openly at the time," never forgot or forgave the quiet mode in which their jealousy had been baffled?

The breach grew gradually wider from other causes. The Lacedæmonian Pausanias, who followed up the campaign by some operations with the combined fleet against the coasts of Asia, was accused of abusing his powers, and even of a leaning to the Persian interests, and was deposed from the command. Many of the allies would not acknowledge his successor, and turned to Athens, with her powerful navy, as the natural leader of Greece, and its protector against foreign invaders. Athens was ready; and their rivals seem to have accepted the change with a good grace, which, under the circumstances, was hardly to be expected, and may be taken as a proof that Pausanias's conduct had become overbearing, and that the feeling against the continuance of the Spartan rule was strong and general.

The Athenians soon arranged that all the allied states should be taxed, either in ships or in money, for the maintenance of a navy for the defence of Greece. Such defence was still a strong necessity; for (though the writer before us does not mention it) we know that the Persian, though driven from Greece itself, still maintained strong garrisons in the coast-towns of Thrace and the Hellespont. This money they took charge of, under the title of "Treasurers of Greece," depositing it in the temple at Delos; whence it was afterwards, and apparently without remonstrance, transferred to the treasury at Athens. Gradually those

smaller states which were allies in name became subjects in reality. If they failed to appear with their contingent when summoned,—if they declined to pay arrears of ships or money,—if they gave any cause of offence to their new leaders,—they were declared contumacious, and reduced to a state of undisguised dependency. The islands of Naxos, Thasos, and Eubœa successively revolted and were reduced; and every reduction of an independent ally to the position of a mere tributary increased the power of Athens. And from time to time the sufferers appealed to Lacedæmon for aid, which was given—willingly enough, it may be conceived—whenever there appeared a fair opening for regaining their own ascendancy; so that an intermittent succession of hostilities went on for twenty years. There had grown up in Greece by degrees two great rival interests and systems, of which Athens and Lacedæmon were the centres, each claiming a kind of rule over the subordinate states, and even the right to punish any breach of such relation on their parts. But Athens met with her reverses in turn, when she took part in the internal feuds of the Peloponnese: and when a truce of thirty years was agreed upon between the two great rivals, Athens had to give up the ports she had acquired on the Corinthian gulf, and to lose altogether her hold on the peninsula.

CHAPTER III.

CAUSES OF THE WAR.

THE truce which bore the name of the "Thirty Years" lasted barely fourteen. They were years of activity and prosperity, and of accumulating wealth and power, for Athens, all which was watched with natural alarm by her neighbour and rival. Samos, perhaps the most powerful of all the states in the Athenian league, revolted and was reduced, and another island fleet thus added to the Athenian navy. The tribute paid by the several dependent states was gradually increased, and they had to go to Athens for arbitration in all cases of dispute among themselves. Her rule, from that of a leader amongst equals, had become an imperial government, but there is nothing to show that it was oppressive or unjust. The master-mind in the city was Pericles, who had large views for the future of his country. He had raised the material grandeur of the city itself to such a pitch, that Thucydides says that if the stranger of some distant future should come to look upon her ruins, "he would estimate her power to have been even double what it was."

Perhaps the ablest and bitterest enemy of the

Athenian rule was Corinth. She was the earliest naval power in Greece, and Athens had eclipsed her. Her position on "the two seas" gave her great commercial opportunities, and Athens, by her occupation of Megara and its ports (though she had had to give these up), had interfered with her. From Corinth one of the overt causes of the breaking-out of the great war arose. Settlers from Corinth had colonised the island of Corcyra (Corfu); and Corcyra in its turn had thrown off a fresh swarm of colonists to Epidamnus, on the coast of Illyria.* In this new settlement, one of the usual feuds between nobles and commons led to an appeal on the one side to Corcyra, and on the other to Corinth as their common ancestress: and Corinth, already jealous of the Corcyræans as having shown too little deference to the mother state, at once prepared for war against her refractory daughter. After some vain attempt at negotiations, a severe engagement took place between the two fleets, in which the colonists (who mustered no less than a hundred and twenty sail) were victorious. But they felt that, standing alone as they did, belonging to neither of the great confederacies, they should be no match for Corinth in a prolonged struggle: they appealed for aid to Athens, and asked to be admitted into her confederacy. The Athenians were unwilling, by an act of overt hostility, to break the thirty years' truce with the Peloponnesians: and this they thought to avoid by concluding with Corcyra a defensive alliance only. "They foresaw," says Thucydides, "that in any case

* Called by the Romans Dyrrhachium—the modern Durazzo.

a war with the Peloponnesians they must have; and they did not care to let Corcyra, with so large a naval force, fall into the hands of the Corinthians, but preferred that the two powers should wear themselves out as much as possible against each other, that so they might find the Corinthians and other naval states all the weaker when they went to war with them, if such necessity should arise."

A squadron of ten ships was sent to Corcyra, with orders not to act against the Corinthians except in defence of the island. Such orders are seldom very strictly obeyed. In a sea-fight which followed, the Athenian contingent ranged itself in line of battle with the Corcyræans, and when they saw their friends hard pressed, fairly charged the victorious enemy. "Such was the first ground of rupture between the Corinthians and Athenians — that the latter had, in time of truce, fought against them on the side of the Corcyræans."

Another act of aggression was charged against them in the matter of Potidæa, a Corinthian settlement on the Isthmus of Pallene in Thrace, but now in alliance with Athens. The Athenians had reason to know that this doubtful ally, at the instigation of the king of Macedon (and they believed of the Corinthians also), was meditating revolt; and they anticipated the danger which might have involved the defection of all their dependencies in that quarter by a peremptory summons to pull down part of their wall, dismiss the Corinthian magistrates, and give hostages for their fidelity. A strong naval and land force was sent to

enforce these demands. The Potidæans refused them, and declared their independence. Aid was sent to them at once from Corinth; but the Athenian commander drove the relieving force inside the walls, and strictly blockaded Potidæa by land and sea. And hence arose a second case, alleged by both parties, of a direct breach of the existing treaties: the Corinthians making it ground of complaint that the Athenians had attacked a colony of theirs; and Athens on her part asserting that the Peloponnesians had tampered with one of their allies and tributaries, excited them to revolt, and aided them with force of arms. "But not yet," says the historian, "had war actually broken out; there was still a pause before the conflict, for the Corinthians had acted on their own independent account."

But now they appeared by their envoys at Lacedæmon, and there, in a general congress to which the representatives of all the confederate states were summoned, publicly accused Athens of having broken the terms of the truce. Megara and Ægina were equally loud in complaint. An embassy had also just arrived from Athens on other business, and was allowed to be present at the debate. Our author gives at some length the orations delivered, or which might have been delivered, by the representatives of both interests. The deputies from Corinth reserved their special act of accusation until the last, after the other complainants had been heard, in order to give full effect to their denunciation. Their exordium is an example of the acknowledged rule in rhetoric—to begin by gaining, if possible, the favour of the court:—

"Your own good faith, men of Lacedæmon, in your internal politics and in your dealings with your neighbours, makes you naturally inclined to give less credit to any accusation we have to prefer against others; and this same character, while it makes you temperate in your judgment, leaves you more ignorant than you ought to be of what is going on elsewhere."

.The encroachments of Athens upon the liberties of Greece, they went on to say, had long been notorious. They were bold to assert that for this Lacedæmon herself was somewhat to blame, as having allowed Athens to rebuild her walls, and tacitly permitted her to override her weaker neighbours. The orator is very plain-spoken as to the duties of strong neutral powers:—

"It is not the state which actually destroys the liberty of others, but the state which has the power to prevent this and will not use it, which is really guilty; especially when it enjoys an honourable reputation as the deliverer of Greece. . . . We know well by what roads and with what gradual approaches Athens moves upon her neighbours. So long as she fancies she can escape detection owing to your apathetic nature, she will not venture too far; but when she feels that though you see her designs you take no notice, then she will urge them forward with the strong hand. For you, Lacedæmonians, are the only power in all Greece who sit inactive, defending yourselves against your enemies not by prompt exercise of strength but

by mere demonstration, and who proceed to crush the growth of a hostile power, not in its early stages but in its full development. Yet you used to be reckoned men to be depended on, whereas this character rests rather on repute than on fact. For we know ourselves that the Mede had marched from the ends of the earth upon the Peloponnese, before you were ready to meet him in any adequate force: and now these Athenians, who are not, like the Mede, far away, but close at hand, you take no heed of; but instead of taking the first step against them, you prefer waiting to defend yourselves when they attack you, and to risk everything by postponing the struggle until they shall have become far stronger than they are now. . . . Let no one think this language is spoken in enmity—it is in remonstrance: we may remonstrate even with our friends, when they make mistakes; accusation is for the enemies who have wronged us."

If the Corinthian spokesman really "dealt so faithfully" with his hearers, and if the Lacedæmonians listened to his utterances as to the wise words of a friend, it was creditable to the honesty of both, and stands out in favourable contrast with very much of modern political oratory. But it may be possible for a reader, without incurring the charge of needless scepticism, to fancy that he discerns the strictures of an Athenian statesman put into the mouth of the Corinthian envoy. So when, a little further on, the orator goes on to estimate and criticise the dangerous enemies with whom they would soon have to deal, we might

fancy that we detect the subtle irony which implies praise under cover of censure. The Athenians, says their accuser—

"Are bold beyond their strength, venturous even against their judgment, sanguine in the midst of danger; while your wont is to let your deeds fall below your powers, in judgment scarcely to trust even to certainties, and in danger never to entertain a hope of escape. Verily they are as prompt as you are dilatory, as fond of foreign expeditions as you are of home; for they think they may gain somewhat by going abroad, you fancy that by such expeditions you may even risk what you have. When they are victorious over their enemy, they follow up their success to the utmost, and when beaten they least lose heart. . . . When they fail in a design, they look upon themselves as robbed of their just due; when they succeed in making an acquisition, they hold it trifling compared with what they intend shall follow. . . . They have little enjoyment of what they have, because they are always busy getting more; their only idea of a festival is the discharge of a duty, and they consider inactive leisure a greater infliction than laborious occupation. In short, one might very fairly sum up their character by saying that they were born to have no rest themselves, nor to allow their neighbours to have any."—(I. 68-71.)

The speaker ended by calling on the Lacedæmonians to deliver Potidæa, and thus maintain their high posi-

tion in Greece—"the noble inheritance which their fathers had bequeathed to them."

Then the Athenian envoys asked permission to speak. Not in reply to the accusation, they said—for they did not admit the jurisdiction of that court—but on the general question. Greece had no need to fear them—and much reason to be proud of them. Had they all forgotten Marathon and Salamis? Were the Lacedæmonians jealous of their dominion? It was a greatness that had been thrust upon them in the first instance; they had but accepted the leadership of Greece at the request of the Greeks themselves. But, granted that they did not care to retire from this position, now that they had once attained it,—was there anything unnatural in that? And if the states now dependent on Athens were to change their masters, and come under the power of some others they could name, would their position be improved?

"Do not resolve, then, hastily, for this is no mere question of the moment; do not be led away by other people's fancies and complaints, and so bring trouble on yourselves; but consider, before you involve yourselves in it, how very apt war is to disappoint all calculations, and how, when protracted, its results come to depend mainly upon fortune, which is beyond the control of either party, and whose event both have to risk in the dark. When men have to contend with an enemy, they are too apt to begin with action, which should be the last resort; and only when they get into difficulties they apply themselves to negotiation. But we have not yet taken this false step, nor do we see

that you have; and we adjure you, while prudent counsels are still within the choice of both, not to violate the treaty or break your oaths, but to let the points in dispute be settled by arbitration, in accordance with the terms. Or else, calling to witness the gods who received our oaths, we will try to meet you if you begin hostilities, on whatever path you lead the way."—(I. 78.)

The representatives of the confederate states were ordered to withdraw, that the Lacedæmonians might deliberate among themselves in council.* The majority of the voices were for immediate war; but Archidamus, second of that name, who was then one of the two kings, urged upon them milder counsels. He was old enough, he said, to have seen something of war, and he knew what it was. He knew also the strength of Athens. They were no match for her in resources—especially in ships and money. In heavy infantry, no doubt, they were superior; but heavy infantry could not be employed everywhere. "Let us not buoy ourselves up," he warns them, "with that delusive hope that, if we do but lay waste their lands, the war will soon be over; I rather fear that we may leave it as a heritage to our children." Let them try negotiation first; meanwhile, let them improve their revenue, and make good preparation for war if it must come.

* The subordinate states in the Spartan confederacy seem to have been allowed only to give their several votes in these conventions either in confirmation or rejection of a measure proposed by Sparta.

The debate was closed by Sthenilaïdas, one of the Ephors, and who in that capacity had to take the votes, in a speech of true Spartan brevity, which we may well conceive as having been actually spoken. It is perhaps the only instance in which any distinct peculiarity of style, national or individual, appears in any of these orations: —

"The long harangue of the Athenians I do not understand: they praised themselves a good deal, but they never denied they had wronged our allies and the Peloponnese generally. And if they did show themselves good men and true in past days against the Medes, yet show themselves bad men towards us now, why, they deserve double punishment, for having turned from good to bad. But we are the same men now that we were then; and if we be wise, we shall not see our allies wronged, or put off avenging them; for they cannot put off their suffering. Others may have plenty of money, and ships, and horses; we have trusty allies, whom we are not to sacrifice to the Athenians, or leave the question to arbitration and talk—it is not by talk that we are being injured—but avenge them at once with all speed and with all our might. And let no man tell me that, when we are wronged, we must consider about it: it is more fitting for people to consider—and consider a long time, too —before they do a wrong. Vote for war, then, Lacedæmonians, as befits the honour of Sparta; and do not let the Athenians increase their power, nor let us desert our allies, but put our trust in the gods, and march at once against these wrong-doers."—(I. 86.)

War was voted, by a large majority—"not so much," says Thucydides, "because they had been convinced by the arguments of their allies, as because they feared the growing power of Athens." They next sent to Delphi to consult the oracle; and the answer, as reported, ran to this effect: "If they made war with all their might, the victory should be theirs; and that the god himself would help them, whether they summoned him or not."

In accordance with the constitution of the Spartan League, the subject-allies were now called upon to confirm or reject the decision. They were convoked at Delos; and again envoys came from Corinth to reiterate their appeal. Again they inveighed against the growing ambition of Athens, and prophesied success if all did but co-operate against her vigorously; but operations must be immediate to be effectual, for Potidæa was in danger of falling every day.

The votes of the confederate states were taken in succession, and the majority were for war. They were unprepared for immediate action, but they undertook to provide their several contingents with as little delay as might be.*

* It may be well to note in this place the chief allies and dependants of both parties during the war. On the side of Athens—the islands of the Archipelago and its neighbourhood generally (except Melos and Thera, which were neutral), and of Corcyra and Zacynthus; the Ionian colonies on the coast of Asia Minor; and the towns of Platæa and Naupactus in Greece itself. On the side of Lacedæmon—the whole of the Peloponnese except Argos and Achaia (neutral), Mégara, Bœotia, Locris, Phocis, &c., in Greece proper.

CHAPTER IV.

OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES.

It was full a year after the Lacedæmonians had decided upon war that hostilities actually began. They sent repeated embassies to Athens with complaints; not so much, says the historian, with a view to arranging the dispute, as "in order that they might show as good cause as possible for going to war, if the Athenians would not listen to them."

Both parties had invoked the aid of the gods in what each protested was the cause of right and justice. Both now sought to put their adversaries in the wrong on the religious ground. The Lacedæmonians sent a solemn demand to the Athenians "to purge themselves from the breach of sanctuary in the matter of Cylon." It was an old story, dating back nearly two hundred years. This Cylon, with a body of partisans, had seized the Acropolis of Athens with the view of setting up a despotism; had failed, and made his escape. But some of his adherents had taken sanctuary at the altar of Minerva in the citadel, had been tempted from there by the promise of safety, and afterwards put to death. The parties implicated in this sacrilegious

proceeding had been banished, but afterwards allowed to return; and the demand now was—avowedly in deference to the national religious feeling of Greece—that the descendants of this accursed race should at once be expelled from Athens. But the real object of disinterring such a question at this moment was, no doubt, as Thucydides considers it to have been, to call upon Athens for the expulsion of her ablest citizen and most earnest advocate of resistance. Pericles, by his mother's side, was descended from the great house of Alcmæon, who were implicated in the charge. It was not probable that Athens would comply with the demand; and here would be another pretext for war, under a religious sanction.

The Athenians were not slow in retorting. They had even a double-edged weapon of the kind to bring to bear against their enemies. There was the notorious case of Sparta's great hero, Pausanias, whom—guilty or not guilty of the treason imputed to him—his countrymen had starved to death in the "Brazen House" of Minerva. There was the case, too, of the rebel Helots who had been forcibly dragged from the shrine of Neptune at Tænarus and put to death—an act which the Spartans themselves confessed had been punished by an earthquake, sent by the great "Earth-shaker;" let them now drive out of their city the families of all concerned in these notorious acts of sacrilege, if they would go to war with clean hands.

The Lacedæmonians sent an embassy to offer terms to Athens. If they would raise the siege of Potidæa—if they would restore the independence of Ægina—

if they would rescind the decree which excluded all Megareans, on pain of death, from Athenian ports and markets—and if they would undertake in the future to respect the independence of the weaker allies,—then peace might be still maintained. This was refused; and then they sent their ultimatum, couched in the briefest and most haughty terms—Let Athens declare the independence of all the Greeks, and there might yet be peace.

These terms were discussed in full assembly at Athens. Opinions were divided, until Pericles, son of Xanthippus, "the foremost man in Athens at that time, both in eloquence and practical ability," came forward and spoke. It may be here observed that Thucydides gives us scarcely anything that can be called a character, or even the briefest biographical notice, of the great men who play such important parts in his history. He introduces them to us, as in this passage, in the fewest possible words; and he dismisses them sometimes —notably in this case of Pericles—with even less formality. This may be partly owing to the fact that he was writing, in the first instance, for a generation contemporary with the events he narrates, and to whom the characters in the story, their personal history and their habits of life, were all well known. But the omission of such notices, absolutely necessary as they are in order to appreciate the influence of such men upon the domestic and foreign history of their country, and which the modern reader has to gather as he may from other sources, is especially remarkable in an author who declares at the outset that he is

writing not for cotemporaries only, but for all posterity.

Pericles, of whom he tells us at once so much and so little, had now been the virtual ruler of the Athenian people for above thirty years, and was to hold that position, with only what may be called accidental interruptions, for yet some few years more. Virtual ruler,—for his power, which was at one period greater than that of any man before or since in Athens, rested only on a tacit recognition of his supremacy, and not on any legal or constitutional grounds. He was neither archon nor member of the great Court of Areopagus: he was but a young man of good family who had gained an ascendancy in the state, partly at first by the popularity and influence inherited from his father Xanthippus, but mainly by his own consummate abilities. His position in the state may be not inaptly, though not quite accurately, compared with that of an English commoner who, with a good introduction to public life, has been raised by the voice of the nation to the Premiership—and who may at any time, by a sudden change in that voice, have to retire into the ranks again. All authorities are agreed in describing the personal qualifications of Pericles as having been remarkable. In person he was compared to the godlike Peisistratus: his head was said to be as beautiful as that of the statues of Bacchus, or even as Jupiter himself—though his enemies, alluding to some slight deformity, said that it must, then, be an "onion-headed" Jupiter. Statesman, soldier, and philosopher, a man of highly cultivated tastes and varied accom-

plishments, he represented well the Athens which he "had found of brick and left of marble." And, however he may be indebted to Thucydides for much of the oratory put into his mouth in this 'History of the War,' it is certain that his own eloquence was of the most commanding order.

It was he who now came forward to urge upon the wavering Assembly an uncompromising refusal of the Peloponnesian demands, as the only course consistent with the honour of Athens. To arbitration they might have consented; but this was sheer dictation. "Any demand which an equal insists upon enforcing on a neighbour, before offering to submit it to arbitration, means nothing more or less than subjection, be such demand great or small." They had the advantage of their adversaries in wealth, in unity of counsels, and above all in their fleet. Only let no exasperation which they might feel at the probable devastation of their territory tempt them to meet the enemy's land forces in a general engagement: there, they would be no match for them. Let them look upon themselves in the light of islanders, and guard well the sea and their capital. He foresaw more danger from their own schemes of foreign conquest than from the present enemy.

This warlike speech was received with acclamation, and the Lacedæmonian ultimatum rejected. And soon the war began in earnest, though as yet hostile operations were strictly local. The town of Platæa lay within the territory of Bœotia, of which Thebes was the leading state: but ever since the great day of

the battle to which it gave its name, it had continued the faithful and honoured ally of Athens, but with its independence guaranteed by the national gratitude of all the Greek states. But it was only natural that the Thebans should have been always jealous of this little "state within a state;" especially since the fact of this independence and alliance with Athens was a standing memorial of Theban weakness—or worse —in betraying the interest of Greece in her struggle with Persia. An attempt was now made by Thebes to detach Platæa forcibly from the Athenian protectorate, and absorb it into the Bœotian league. A party of three hundred Thebans, admitted under cover of night by some friends within, tried to make themselves masters of the place: they failed, the majority were taken prisoners, and put to death in cold blood. The cruelty was nothing very exceptional in those times; but in this particular case, a breach of faith was alleged against the men of Platæa, and the Athenians (to whom, on the first alarm, an appeal for aid had been despatched) had even sent — too late—to desire that the prisoners might not be dealt with till their arrival. They at once garrisoned the town, as a siege by the enraged Thebans was imminent.

Both confederacies now prepared for a war whose area and proportions none could undertake to limit. The Peloponnesian Greeks even thought of sending to ask aid of the national enemy—"the King," as the Persian monarch was always termed by those who had little acquaintance with monarchies. Thucydides

describes the intense expectation which prevailed throughout peninsular and continental Greece :—

"No operations on a small scale were in the thought of either party, but they braced themselves for war in earnest. And not unnaturally; for men are always most eager at starting, and at that date there was a large body of youth growing up in the Peloponnese, and in Athens too, who took to war enthusiastically, as having had no experience of it. And all the rest of Greece looked on in anxious expectation at this conflict between its two principal states. Many prophecies were quoted, and the soothsayers gave out a great many oracular verses, both in the states which were going to war and in the others. There had been an earthquake in Delos, moreover, a little before, though the island had never previously felt a shock within the memory of the Greeks; and this was said —and indeed it so seemed—to be a warning of what was to happen. And anything else of the kind which took place was all hunted up for the occasion. The public feeling all ran in favour of the Lacedæmonians, especially as they gave themselves out as the liberators of Greece. Individuals and states alike, all did their best to help them, both by word and deed, in every way they could: and every one thought matters were going all wrong where he could not be present in person. So exasperated were almost all of them against the Athenians, some from the desire to be freed from their rule, others from fear of being brought under it."—(II. 8.) And they all thought,

as the writer tells us in a later part of his work,* that two or three campaigns at most would see the end of that hated dominion, if the allied troops ravaged, as they could easily do, her territory season after season.

Is it because Athens appears to have been thus singly matched against almost all Greece in arms, or is it from an unconscious sympathy with the Athenian historian, fairly impartial as he is acknowledged to be—or because of the final result of the struggle, or from something of that "insularity" of feeling in ourselves which Pericles tried to impress on his countrymen,—that as we read, we nearly all of us become partisans of Athens?

Two-thirds of the regular contingent from each of the Peloponnesian confederates were under orders to assemble at the Isthmus for an invasion of Attica, where they were briefly harangued by the Spartan king Archidamus. A herald was sent in the last resort to Athens, but was escorted back to the frontier that same evening without an audience,—"the Athenians would listen to an envoy when the enemy had quitted their soil." He turned to his escort, as he crossed the border, with the ominous words, adapted from the great national poet,—"This day will be the beginning of much woe to the Greeks."†

Archidamus, after all, proceeded with almost more than Spartan caution; dilatoriness, many of his allies called it. The real explanation, as Thucydides thinks, was that he still believed that, in view of the imme-

* VII. 28. † Homer, Iliad, I. 2.

diate ravaging of their lands, the Athenians would give way. He wasted precious time before the little stronghold of Œnoë, waiting for some message to this effect. They had no such thought; or, if any of them had, they were overborne by the strong spirit of Pericles. He laid before them the statistics of their resources: a yearly income from the tribute paid by the allies of say £140,000; a reserve in the Acropolis of a million and a quarter; in public possessions of uncoined gold and silver, something like £130,000. A very small revenue in the eyes of a modern financier, but doubtless considerable for a Greek state in those early times. Their army—including what we should call the "reserve" forces, fit only for garrison duty—amounted to barely 32,000. A small German principality in our own times would have boasted a larger force. But we must remember that this estimate may safely be doubled in the actual number of men; for each heavy-armed foot-soldier had his shield-bearer, and each horseman his groom. Military strength is relative, in all ages; and perhaps no modern state maintains so large a force, in proportion to its population, as Athens at this time. They had a fleet of 300 war-galleys (each carrying about 300 men), and on those they chiefly depended.*

The Athenian rural population prepared at once to quit their farms and homesteads, and abandon to the invader all the property which could not be carried away. Their cattle and sheep they sent across to

* The population of Athens at this period has been estimated roughly at 500,000. She had something like 60,000 men, in all, on foreign service in the early part of the war.

Eubœa and the adjacent islands; their wives and children, their portable chattels—even the framework of their houses—they carried with them into the city. How far this was an act of national self-devotion, so far as the masses were concerned, or how far they acted under a kind of moral compulsion from Pericles and the more powerful and influential urban residents, it is impossible to say. There is abundant evidence that it was a grievous trial. "They had been accustomed always to a country life, much more than the other Greeks," says our historian; "they suffered great hardship in the removal, especially as they had but lately restored their tenements after the Persian war."

"They went with heavy hearts, and took it hard to have to leave their homes and holy places, which had belonged to their fathers before them, time out of mind, under the old constitution; having to change all their habits of life, and thus to leave what was to each one of them nothing less than their native country. And when they had got into the city, some few had houses there, or found refuge with friends or relatives; but the great number of them had to seek quarters in the vacant parts of the city, and in the precincts of temples and shrines of heroes, except the Acropolis and the temple of Eleusinian Ceres, and other places that were rigidly closed." *—(II. 16, 17.)

* For some humorous details of the shifts to which the newcomers were reduced, the reader may refer to the "Knights" of Aristophanes, where some are represented as having to take up their abode in hen-coops and pigeon-holes.

One forbidden portion of ground was built upon by these new immigrants, in spite of the warning of an ancient oracle that "the Pelasgicon were best uninhabited." This is the only instance, except that of an old prediction popularly quoted at the beginning of this war,—that it should last thrice nine years,*—in which the writer seems to admit any genuine correspondence between the prediction and the event; and even here he philosophically traces the result not to the occupation of forbidden ground, but to the general overcrowding.

It was nearly three months after the failure of the Thebans at Platæa that Archidamus led his forces into Athenian territory; and by that time the country people had secured all their movable property within the city walls. But the corn was just ripe, and the crop of olives coming on, and all were destroyed, almost within sight of the owners. The invaders lingered some time in the district of Acharnæ, less than eight miles from Athens, in the hope either of drawing out the Athenian forces to defend one of their richest and strongest outsettlements, or of driving the Acharnians themselves to disaffection, when they saw the apparent apathy shown by their countrymen to their personal sufferings. But Pericles held the Athenians well in hand. Though the younger men chafed and clamoured to be led into the field, he would not permit an Assembly to be called even to deliberate on the question of marching out, and was content to hear himself now called "the author of all their calamities." It was not till their

* V. 26.

commissariat failed that the invading force withdrew, and disbanded to their several cities.

The Athenians in their turn entered upon the aggressive, sending a powerful fleet of a hundred and fifty galleys to make descents upon the coast of the peninsula. Amongst other places they attacked the strong position at Methone (Modon), on the south-west corner of Laconia, but which was at this time but weakly fortified and garrisoned. But a Lacedæmonian officer happened to be in the neighbourhood who was to play a short but brilliant part in this war; who was soon to be personally matched in the field against Thucydides himself; and whose conduct was to have no little influence on the historian's future fortunes. Brasidas,—the favourite hero of one of our most successful students of ancient history, Arnold of Rugby—and who seems a favourite with Thucydides also, so far as that feeling can be said to exist in his cold judgment,—Brasidas cut his way with a hundred men through the besiegers, and saved the place; the first man, says Thucydides, who received the public thanks of Sparta (not much given to such recognitions) for good service in this war. The Athenians took signal vengeance on the islanders of Ægina, whose demand for independence they regarded as one of the chief causes of the war. They cleared them all off, and settled the island with colonists of their own; and the unfortunate natives had to migrate into a territory assigned them by the Lacedæmonians on the frontier between themselves and that of Argolis. The other hated neighbour of Athens, Megara, was swept by an

overwhelming land and sea force under Pericles in person; and for some years afterwards the visit was repeated by the Athenians year by year, as regularly as the enemy's forces made their raid upon the corn-fields and olive-grounds of Attica.

Early in the winter of this year, at the close of the campaign, the Athenians held their public funeral of those citizens who had fallen in the war. It was a striking national ceremony, probably dating as far back as the close of the great Persian wars. Here is the description of it:—

"They lay out the bones of the slain three days previously in a tent erected for the purpose, and each family bring for their own dead any offering they please. When the time comes for carrying them forth to burial, sarcophagi made of cypress-wood are placed on cars, one for each tribe; in these are laid the bones of each man, according to the tribe to which he belonged; and one bier is carried empty, spread with funeral garments, for the missing, whose bones could not be collected to be brought home. Any one who will, citizen or sojourner, joins in the procession; and the women of the family are present at the funeral, to make their lament for the dead. So they lay them in the public cemetery, which is in the fairest suburb of the city; and there do they always bury those who fall in battle, excepting those who died at Marathon —those heroes they buried there, where they fell, as judging their valour to have been exceptional. And when they lay them in the ground, some citizen selected

by the state, as of proved ability and distinguished reputation, pronounces over them a fitting panegyric; after which all withdraw. In such fashion do they bury them; and all through this war, whenever they had the opportunity, they observed this custom."—(II. 34.)

The speaker chosen on this occasion was Pericles himself. We know, from other sources, that he had performed this duty at least once before—after the reduction of Samos. He now mounted the platform arranged for the purpose, so that his voice might be heard as far as possible by the assembled multitude, and delivered an oration which, as it stands in the pages of Thucydides, is admitted to be one of the finest of those grand rhetorical declamations which were the glory of Athenian orators and the delight of their audience. The arrangement and structure of the sentences, and much of the language, are no doubt the historian's own. But it may be safely assumed that he was present at the delivery, that his admiration of the speaker would have held him in rapt attention, and that his preconceived determination to become the historian of the war would lead him to preserve as much as possible both of the argument and the language—possibly in the shape of notes, certainly from his own recollection and that of others. And memory, it must be allowed, is always most retentive where written records are scarce. We are told, indeed, if we may trust the authority of Cicero, whose assertion may rest upon accurate tradition, that Pericles wrote his

speeches. If this were the case, the historian might have had in his hands a copy. The speaker begins by declaring that no words—certainly not *his* words—can do justice to the actions of the dead; they are beyond all praise of men. Nor will he dwell now on that well-worn topic, the glories of their ancestors. He will speak rather of their internal polity.

"First, let me set forth, before I proceed with my oration, what has been the course of training by which we gained our present position, and what the political constitution and habits of life which have made our greatness. For I think this is a topic not unbefitting the occasion, and one which this whole assembly, citizens and strangers alike, will do well to listen to.

"The constitution we enjoy is no imitation from our neighbours—we claim to be rather a model to others than a copy from them. It bears the name of democracy, because our institutions are for the good of the many, not of the few. In the matter of legal rights, every man stands on the same footing in all private suits in our courts: in the matter of position and reputation, according as a man distinguishes himself in any line of life, so he rises to public honours, not by social caste so much as by merit. Nor is any man excluded on the ground of poverty, by the obscurity of his rank, so he be able to do the state good service. As we live under free institutions in our public life, so in our private daily intercourse with each other we cultivate no spirit of jealousy, nor quarrel with our neighbour because he follows his own tastes, nor cast looks at him intended

to annoy if they cannot punish. While we thus practise forbearance in private intercourse, in public matters we have a thorough fear of licence, hearkening to the constituted authorities and to the laws, especially such as are ordained for the protection of the injured, and to those which, though never formally enacted, all men hold it shame to violate.

"Yet amidst our graver occupations we provide abundant relaxation for the spirits, in the public games and sacrifices which we hold year by year, and in the splendour of our private establishments, in the daily enjoyment of which we banish care. And because of the greatness of this our city, all abundance from all lands comes in to us; and it is our happy lot to enjoy the good things of foreigners not less familiarly than the products of our own soil.

"In our military training we present a contrast to our opponents in these points. We throw our city open to all the world. We have no regulations which exclude the foreigner from full investigation and inspection, for fear lest an enemy may profit by the knowledge;* for we trust not so much to crafty precautions as to our intrinsic valour in action. In our educational training, while some nations aim at forming a warlike spirit by laborious discipline from the earliest years, we, with all our easy life, can face dangers as great, and as boldly, as they can. The facts prove it: the Lacedæmonians never venture on an expedition against our territory with a division only of their army,

* Referring to the Alien Acts (if they may be so termed) by which Sparta jealously guarded herself.

but with their whole force; but when we Athenians unsupported invade our neighbours' territory, we commonly get the best of it, and that easily, though on a hostile soil and against men who are fighting for their homes. Indeed, our collective force no enemy has ever yet engaged, because we have at once to maintain our naval armament and to despatch our troops to so many different quarters on land. But whenever they engage a division of our army, if they beat a detachment they claim to have repulsed our whole force, and to have been defeated by our whole force if they get the worst of it. And surely, if we are willing to face the perils of war out of our careless ease rather than after a painful training, and with a courage that springs from character rather than from regulation, we have this advantage: we never distress ourselves beforehand about perils to come, yet we show ourselves, when we have to face them, fully as brave as others who are always toiling.

"I say our state is to be admired for this, and yet for more than this. We cultivate refinement without extravagance, and philosophy without effeminacy; we value wealth for its practical advantages, not as a thing for boastful display; and it is not the confession of poverty that we hold disgraceful, but rather the not setting ourselves to work to escape from it.

"With us, men are expected to attend to their public as well as to their private duties; even those engaged in manual labour have a competent knowledge of political questions; and we alone, if a man takes no part in such questions, instead of excusing him as being 'no meddler,' despise him as being no good citizen. As a

body, we can all judge of public measures at least, if we cannot originate them; and we do not hold that discussion hinders action, but that the greater hindrance is not to have discussed and understood a measure before we have to carry it out. For I consider we possess in an eminent degree this characteristic,—we are at once bold in conception and careful in the calculation of our plans; whereas in general, ignorance leads men to venture, while calculation makes them hesitate. And those may be rightly adjudged most courageous in spirit, who, with the fullest appreciation of all that is pleasant as well as all that is hard, yet never for that reason shrink from danger. In our estimate of merit, too, we differ from the world in general; we make our friends not by receiving benefits but by conferring them. The party who confers a kindness is like to prove the more constant friend: he seeks by kindness to keep alive the sense of obligation in the party benefited; while he who lies under the obligation is not so eager about it, feeling that all he does in return will be reckoned matter of debt and not of favour. And we are the only people who unhesitatingly give aid where needed, not so much from calculations of interest as from the confidence of a liberal spirit.

"I assert, in short, that our whole polity is a school for Greece; while, if we come to individuals, it is amongst us that the same man shows all personal qualifications for the most varied parts in life, with the most accomplished versatility. That this is no mere vaunting talk for the occasion, but the simple truth of facts, the very power which this state enjoys, and

which it has reached through such a line of conduct, gives proof enough. For ours is the only state which, when brought to the test, rises higher than its reputation; the only one which leaves an invading enemy no mortification at having been worsted at such hands, and gives no subject room to complain that he is governed by unworthy masters. We have given abundant justification for our supremacy: we have not left ourselves without witness; we shall win the admiration both of our own and future generations. We need no Homer to praise us, nor any poet to charm by his verse for the moment, whilst plain facts will afterwards belie the impression thus formed of our deeds. We shall have made every sea and every shore accessible to our daring, and shall have founded everywhere imperishable memorials of our power alike to benefit and to punish. Such is the state for which our friends have fought and died, determined that she should never be wrested from them: and we their survivors will surely be ready, every one of us, to suffer for her too."—(II. 36-41.)

This public funeral must, from the necessity of things, have been rather a commemorative service for those who had fallen in battle, in the majority of cases, than an actual interment of their ashes. Few comparatively were the cases in which the remains of the slain could in any shape have been brought back to Athens. The very boast of the orator, that every known sea and shore bore witness to

Athenian enterprise, tells where she had buried her dead :—

> "Their graves were severed far and wide,
> By mount, and stream, and sea."

The orator makes use of this fact as he goes on.

"They gave their lives for their country, and gained for themselves a glory that can never fade, a tomb that shall stand as a mark for ever. I do not mean that in which their bodies lie, but that in which their renown lives after them, to be remembered for ever on every occasion of speech or action which calls it to mind. For the whole earth is the grave and monument of heroes; it is not the mere graving upon marble in their native land which sets forth their deeds, but even in lands where they were strangers, there lives an unwritten record in every heart, felt though never embodied."

The orator concludes with words of condolence for the sorrowing relatives. They do not rise perhaps much above the unavoidable commonplace of all condolences, and are not free from the artificial rhetoric which he and his hearers loved. Yet there are fine touches here and there.

"I call those fortunate whose death, like theirs, or whose sorrow, like yours, has the fullest portion of honour, and whose end comes at the moment they are happiest. Yet I feel how hard it is to persuade you

of this, when in the triumphs of their comrades—triumphs in which you once used to rejoice—you will so often be reminded of those you have lost: and sorrow is felt not for the blessings we have never tasted, but for those to which we have been accustomed and of which we are deprived. . . .

"And for you, their children or their brothers who are here present, I see an arduous struggle before you. For all are wont to praise those who are no more, and hardly, even though your own deserts be extraordinary, will you be held to have equalled or approached theirs. There is ever a jealousy of the living, as rivals; it is only those who stand no longer in our path that we honour with an ungrudging affection."—(II. 44, 45.)

So, with the promise that the orphans of those who had fallen should be regarded as the children of the state, to be educated and maintained at the public cost, Pericles dismisses the assembly. The winter had now set in, and this public funeral marks the close of the first year of the war.

CHAPTER V.

THE PLAGUE AT ATHENS.

THE second summer of the war began miserably for Athens. The Peloponnesians in full force invaded the country a second time on the west and north, and for forty days cut, burned, and destroyed far more extensively and completely than in their former raid. They had lost all fear of interruption from the Athenian forces, who kept within their walls as formerly, in accordance with the policy of Pericles. But before they had been many days in the country, a far more terrible enemy had made its appearance there, which was likely to spare neither of the parties in the contest, and whose presence, as soon as it was fully recognised, made the invaders hastily withdraw.

A pestilence broke out in the overcrowded streets and suburbs of Athens. Whatever it was—and its exact identification seems impossible—it was said to have begun in Ethiopia, and after passing through Libya, and thence through a great part of the Persian empire, to have crossed the Archipelago, visiting especially the island of Lemnos, and so to have been conveyed, by the usual channel of some merchant

trader, to the harbour of Piræus, which was the quarter where it first broke out within the Athenian walls. At once there arose the cry—to be repeated so often in subsequent history—that the enemy had "poisoned the wells." That in a city crowded beyond all sanitary rules, the wells, or rather tanks, were "poisoned" is highly probable — but hardly by the Peloponnesians. From the description given here by Thucydides, the disease appears to have been a virulent eruptive fever—of what precise type it is impossible to say.* The historian was himself attacked by it, and had also, he tells us, watched the cases of other sufferers. The careful details which he has set down of the symptoms and general course of the disease are considered, by competent medical authorities, remarkable for their clearness and intelligence, when we take into account not only the very imperfect state of medical science, but the fact that the writer cannot be supposed to have had any technical knowledge in such matters. Remarkable, too, is the calm practical foresight which led him to note the particulars, in order that, as he says, by reference to them it might be possible to recognise the disease in case of its recurrence.

"That year, as was generally remarked, was particularly free from cases of ordinary sickness; and if any

* M. Littrè, in his Introduction to the works of Hippocrates (tome i. p. 122), pronounces it to have been "an eruptive fever, differing from smallpox, and now extinct."—See Grote, Hist. of Greece, iv. 278, note.

one had been suffering from a previous attack of any kind, all such cases terminated in this. But in general persons were attacked by it suddenly, while in full health, without ostensible cause. First they were seized with violent flushings about the head, and redness and turgescence of the eyes; within, the fauces and the tongue became all at once blood-red, and the breath unnatural and fetid. After this came on sneezing and hoarseness; and in a short time the suffering extended down into the chest, with violent cough; and when it settled on the heart, it disturbed its action, and produced bilious discharges of all kinds known to medical language, accompanied by great distress.* In most cases a dry hiccup came on, causing violent spasms, which sometimes ceased soon, and in other cases lasted a long time. The surface of the body was neither very hot to the touch nor pallid, but rather red, livid, and covered with an eruption of small blisters and sores; while the internal heat was so great, that the patients could not bear upon them the thinnest garment or the finest linen, or to lie any other way than naked, and had a longing to throw themselves into cold water. Nay, many who were not carefully watched actually did so, into the tanks, urged by an insatiable thirst; and it made no difference what they drank, much or little. They suffered severely from a distressing restlessness and want of sleep through-

* It is difficult to ascertain the exact meaning of the *quasi* medical words used in this passage by Thucydides; far more difficult than it would be in a medical writer, such as Hippocrates.

out. Yet during the whole time the disease was at its height, the body was not sensibly emaciated, but held out against all this suffering in a way beyond belief; so that most died about the seventh or ninth day, of inward fever, still retaining considerable strength. Or, if they survived this crisis, when the disease passed into the abdomen, severe ulceration supervening, with profuse diarrhœa, the majority died of this last, from sheer exhaustion. For the disease, which had its first seat in the head, passed down gradually through the whole body; and if any one got through the worst stages, it was apt to leave its marks upon him by seizing the extremities, for it lighted on the fingers and toes; and many only escaped with the loss of these, and, in some few cases, of their eyes as well. Some, when they rose from their sick-bed, had lost all at once their recollection of everything, and did not even know who they were, or recognise their nearest friends.

"For the character of this disease was terrible beyond description: and it attacked its victims in a way which human nature could not endure. And one point in which it showed itself distinct from all known maladies was this—that the birds and beasts which commonly prey on human bodies, either refused to touch the many dead who lay unburied, or, if they tasted them, died. As a proof of this, there was a remarkable disappearance of such birds of prey, and they were not seen either about these places or anywhere else: but the dogs, owing to their domestica-

tion, afforded a better opportunity of noting the result in such cases.*

. . . . . .

"Some of the sufferers died untended, and some after receiving all care and medical treatment. And there was no one approved mode of treatment, so to speak, which could be had recourse to in the hope of benefit; for what did good in one case did harm in another. Nor was a good constitution any proof of strength to resist it, or of weakness; but it seized all alike, even such as were under dietetic treatment previously. And the most terrible feature of all in this disease was the despondency when any one felt himself sickening (for they betook themselves to despair at once, and gave up morally even more than physically, and so offered no resistance), and the way in which they imbibed infection from attending each other, and died like sheep. And this it was that caused the greatest mortality. For if out of fear they were unwilling to come near one another, then the sufferers died from being left untended; and many households were swept entirely away, from lack of any to nurse them. Or, if any did go near the sick, they

* Livy (lxi. 21) makes the same remark as to these natural scavengers, in his notice of the pestilence in Italy, B.C. 174. In England, in 1348, the "Black Death" was accompanied by a murrain among the cattle, and it was remarked that the birds of prey would not touch the carcases. (The cattle of the Athenians, it may be remembered, had mostly been carried over to the islands, and therefore probably escaped.)

lost their lives, and especially those who had a character for goodness; for they, for honour's sake, would not spare themselves, but went in and out among their friends, whereas even the very members of the family grew tired of mourning over the dying, so utterly beaten were they by the overwhelming misery. However, those who had recovered showed more compassion for the sick and dying, because they knew what it was, and stood in no fear now for themselves; for it never attacked the same person twice, at least so as to be fatal. And such persons were thought very fortunate by their neighbours, and felt a kind of hope themselves, in the joy of their present escape, of immunity for the future, and that they should never now fall victims to any other disease."—(II. 49-51.)

There was a great physician living at this time, quite within reach of Athens, who must have heard of this terrible epidemic, and it seems hardly possible but that some cases must have come under his hands. Hippocrates of Cos was probably then resident either in the island of Thasos, or at Abdera in Thrace; but though he has left us a body of cases, and though he speaks of a "malignant year," which may or may not (for he gives no date) be the year in which this pestilence was prevalent, he has not put on record any case which can be safely referred to this terrible epidemic. It has been thought possible that Thucydides, in his exile, may have seen and conversed with the great physician, and submitted to his correction his notes on

the disease, which would account for their almost technical minuteness.

The fatal character of the pestilence was aggravated, as the historian observes, by the crowded state of the city, which rendered impossible the observance of even such imperfect sanitary regulations as we may conceive then existing in Athens. His picture of the sight which the plague-stricken city presented is given in few but emphatic words:—

"Living as they did in close stifling cabins in the hot time of the year, the mortality raged among them in horrible fashion. The bodies lay dying one upon another, rolling in agony in the public streets and round all the fountains, in their eagerness after water. Even the sacred precincts, in which some had pitched tents, were full of the dead bodies of those who had expired there; for in their overwhelming misery, not knowing what would become of them, men grew careless of all distinctions sacred or profane."—(II. 52.)

He goes on to speak of the disregard of all the decent rites of burial, to which a Greek mind attached perhaps even more value than we do ourselves. He tells us how corpses were thrown by the bearers upon funeral piles which had already been lighted for another family; and how even sometimes a pile was surreptitiously set fire to and made to do its office for a stranger, before its proper corpse could be carried out for burial. But more striking than all is the description which he gives of the utter depravation of

morals, and "recklessness of living," which followed upon these daily spectacles of sudden and horrible death. It was the complete carrying out into practice of the heathen motto, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

"Deeds which men did before in secret, not daring to give full rein to their lusts, they now did with all freedom, as seeing the sudden change which came in a moment between the rich who died suddenly, and the poor who came into their wealth instead. So they determined upon swift enjoyment and instant gratification, holding life and riches alike things of a day. As for wearying themselves in the pursuit of what was honourable, it was what no man cared to do, for he held it uncertain whether he might not be carried off before he attained it; but whatever was pleasant for the moment, and whatever led to that by any means, this stood for honourable and expedient. Fear of the gods, or respect for man, there was none to restrain them: in the one case, because they judged it to be all the same whether they gave them worship or not, from seeing that all perished alike; and in the case of crimes against man, none expected that they should live to be brought to trial and suffer the penalty for them; but that a far heavier sentence had already been passed upon them, and was hanging over their heads, and that it was but fair they should have some enjoyment of life before it fell."—(II. 53.)

A similar result, with regard to public morality, is

said to have accompanied the great plague at Florence in 1348. Boccaccio says, in his account of it, that "when the evil had become universal, the hearts of all the inhabitants were closed to feelings of humanity;" and that, "amid the general lamentation and woe, the influence and authority of every law human and divine vanished." * The same was the case to some extent during the prevalence of the "Black Death" in England, in the same year.

The oracle of Apollo, it may be remembered, had promised the Peloponnesians, at the beginning of the war, that the god himself would help them, "invited or uninvited." It was to the influence of the Sun-god that the Greeks, not altogether without reason, attributed visitations of pestilence. He was the sender of such diseases, as he was also emphatically the "Healer." The Peloponnesians might well have recognised his aid when they heard of the terrible sufferings of their enemies; and it is somewhat remarkable that their own army, considering its immediate proximity, seems wholly to have escaped. The Athenians on their part bethought themselves of a half-forgotten oracular verse which warned them of a Dorian war to come, "and with it a pestilence." There was considerable doubt as to this latter word; for while some insisted that it was pestilence (*loimos*), others said it was famine (*limos*) which had been predicted. The ambiguity was natural enough, for the pronunciation of the two words in the Greek was exactly the same—*lémos*. The comment of the historian himself is curiously modern in

* Hecker, Epidem. of Middle Ages, p. 47.

its scepticism. Naturally, he says, that reading of the oracle was universally adopted which fitted in best with present circumstances; people's memory is apt to adapt itself to notorious facts. "I suppose, however," he goes on to say, "if another Dorian war were to come after this, and a *famine* happened to accompany it, in all probability the verse would be made to run accordingly."

It had been part of the deliberate policy of Pericles to allow the invaders to work their will upon the fields of Attica; but he was taking energetic measures to carry on the war against them where Athens had always the advantage—by sea. While the enemy's troops were still quartered in Athenian territory, he was sweeping the southern coast of the Peloponnese with a fleet of a hundred and fifty sail: landing here and there, and employing his heavy infantry, and even a body of cavalry (which we read of now for the first time as being conveyed over sea in horse-transports), against the maritime towns, with considerable success. Another effort was made also against Potidæa, which was still holding out. But the plague accompanied the reinforcements which were sent to Thrace, and Hagnon, who commanded them, after losing in one month one-fourth of his 4000 men, had to put to sea again to save the remainder.

In this season of distress, the commons of Athens turned upon the man whom they regarded as the author of it all—Pericles, who had advocated the war, and promised them certain victory. They accused him, openly and secretly, of being the ruin of his country,

and clamoured loudly for peace at any price with Sparta. The great statesman was neither surprised nor alarmed at the turn of popular opinion. It was the very thing he had expected, says the historian. By virtue of his office of general, which he still held, he summoned a public Assembly. He told them plainly that nothing of the kind surprised him : it was the way of the world ; but surely, unworthy of Athenians. For himself, he scorned to qualify his original advice, or admit that he had been mistaken.

"I am the same that I was then, and I am not going to retreat from my position : it is you who are changed ; for the fact is, you were ready to follow my advice when danger had not touched you, and you repent now that you have begun to suffer ; and my counsel seems to you to be wrong, owing to your own weakness of resolution : because the suffering comes home to each man's feelings at once, while the advantages do not as yet make themselves clear to any. Because a great reverse, and that on the sudden, has befallen you, you are too utterly dispirited to persevere in the course you chose. Yes—the sudden and the unexpected, and what befalls us contrary to all reasonable calculation, *has* a tendency to enslave the spirit ; and this is your case, especially as regards this pestilence, coming as it has in addition to our other misfortunes. Still, citizens as you are of a great city, and brought up in principles corresponding to this greatness, it were your duty to stand up cheerfully against great reverses too, and never tarnish your high name. For the world

claims the same right to censure those who from lack of spirit fail to maintain the reputation they have won, as to hate those who impudently grasp at that to which they have no claim. Your duty is to check your grief for your private sufferings, and hold fast to the maintenance of the public weal."

There are passages in this speech which would seem to show that even Pericles had sometimes before him that vision of a widespread empire which had already begun to dazzle some of the leading minds at Athens.

"You look upon your empire as extending only over your subject-allies: I can show you that of the two realms open to men's use—land and sea—you are already wholly masters of the one as far as you reach now, and as much further as you may choose to reach. With the force you have, there is no king nor any nation existing at this present who can hinder you from sailing whither you will. So that this power is not to be put in comparison with your property in lands and houses, which you think it so much to lose. It is not reasonable that you should take the loss of these things so hardly: you should regard them rather with indifference, as the mere appanages and embellishments of a wealthy estate, when weighed against that power I speak of. Be sure that if we only cling to and maintain our freedom, that will easily recover for us all the rest; whilst if once we bow to the power of others, all we possess will be likely to crumble away. Show that you have not degenerated in two great

points from your fathers: through toil and danger they acquired this dominion — they did not receive it as an inheritance from others; moreover, they maintained it and handed it down to you: and it were baser to let what we have be taken from us, than to have been unsuccessful in its acquisition.

. . . . . .

"Do not suppose that you are fighting on this single question—whether it shall be vassalage or independence; it is also whether you will be stripped of your empire, and so incur all the danger arising from the hatred your rule has provoked. And you cannot give it up now—if any man under present circumstances, because he is afraid, should propose to play the magnanimous by so doing, and would have us as a nation retire into private life. This power you hold has already become a despotism, which, however it may have been unrighteous to usurp, it is very dangerous to lay down. Such counsellors would very soon ruin a state if they could persuade their fellow-citizens, or if they were to occupy an independent colony anywhere by themselves; for the peacemonger is only safe so long as he has a fighting friend to stand by him; and it cannot be good policy for a sovereign state, whatever it may be for a subject one, to seek its safety in loss of independence."—(II. 61-63.)

The effect of this speech upon the Athenians was that, so far as any change in their public policy went, they followed the advice of Pericles, and gave up the project of making terms with Sparta. But so bitterly did they

feel the pressure of the war upon them as individuals, so personally angry were they with him as its author, that they called upon him to furnish a statement of his expenditure of the public treasure, and on some pretence of malversation, fined him a sum of money—"and not long after," says our historian, "chose him general again, and put everything into his hands." They had made trial, it would seem, of some weaker instruments meanwhile, and found them wanting.

And here—restored to his old supremacy—the great Athenian disappears from the pages of our historian. He lived about a year longer; just long enough to see the termination of the long blockade of Potidæa, which capitulated to the Athenians on terms that the sovereign people thought far too easy,—the garrison and inhabitants being allowed to evacuate the place with something like the honours of war. But the death of Pericles is only briefly mentioned by the way. Thucydides is emphatically the historian of the war, and he seldom turns aside to dwell upon the personal history or characters of even the most illustrious of those who took part in it. In the case of Pericles, however, his earnest admiration of the man finds expression even in the brief record which, with exceptional favour, he pauses here for a moment to give of his services to the state:—

"So long as he stood at the head of state in time of peace, he governed with moderation and maintained it in safety, and under him it rose to its highest power. And when the war broke out, he proved that he had

well calculated the state's resources. He lived through two years and a half of it; and when he died, his foresight as to its conduct became even more generally admitted. For he always said that if they kept quiet, and paid due attention to their navy, and did not grasp at extension of empire during the war, or expose their city to danger, they would be the victors. But they did the very contrary to all this; and in matters which seemed to have no reference to the war, they followed an evil policy as to their own interests and those of their allies, in accordance with their private jealousies and private advantage; measures which, when successful, brought honour and profit to individuals only, while if they failed, the disadvantage was felt by the state in its results on the war. The reason lay in this; that Pericles, powerful by his influence and ability, and manifestly incorruptible by bribes, exercised a control over the masses combined with excellent tact, and rather led them than allowed them to lead him. For since he did not gain his ascendancy by unbecoming means, he never used language to humour them, but was able, on the strength of his high character, even to oppose their passions. That is, when he saw them overweeningly confident without just grounds, he would speak so as to inspire them with a wholesome fear; or when they were unreasonably alarmed, he would raise their spirits again to confidence. It was a nominal democracy, but in fact the government of the one foremost man."—(II. 65.)

All the authorities which we have for the history

of the times fully bear out this estimate of the position of Pericles in the Athenian state. For the private sorrows which marked the close of his life, and which may have helped to shorten it, we have to turn to the—not always veracious—pages of Plutarch. He had lost by the prevailing epidemic two sons, a sister, and many of his dearest political friends. He died of some lingering malady; Plutarch says it was one form of the same disease. True patriot to the end, when the friends who stood round his deathbed were speaking of his glorious career, he checked them by remarking that none had yet named what he held to be his chief glory—"that no fellow-citizen had ever had cause to put on mourning through him."

The plague continued its ravages in Athens for two whole years, and then, after an interval of twelve months, broke out again B.C. 427, and lasted another year. It carried off altogether 4400 of the heavy infantry, 300 cavalry (all of whom would be citizens of some position), and of the lower classes "a number never ascertained:" of women and children the historian seems to take no account. The total loss of life probably exceeded the number of those slain in battle during the whole war.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SIEGE OF PLATÆA.

THE confederate Peloponnesians now sought aid from a quarter any appeal to which, we might have thought, would have been held treason to Greece, did we not know that Athens had done the same early in the war. They sent an embassy to the king of Persia, to ask for a subsidy and for troops. Their envoys took Thrace in their way, endeavouring to detach Sitalces, king of a large part of Thrace, from the interests of Athens, and to induce him to make an attack on their colony of Potidæa. The negotiation was more than unsuccessful; for the son of Sitalces, who had received the freedom of Athens, put the visitors into the hands of the Athenians. They were carried at once to Athens, and there put to death without a hearing—in retaliation, the Athenians said, for similar cruel treatment of their own merchant-sailors and others who had been captured by the enemy on their coasts. But the barbarities which marked this war in general were so great on both sides, that Thucydides might have spared here, as he commonly does, any apology or explanation.

In the chronicle of this year we get one of the few

notices which occur in our author's pages of Athenian commerce; and here only because it falls into the history of the war. They sent a squadron of six ships to watch the coast of Lycia and Caria, both for the purpose of getting subsidies of money from the sea-coast towns, and also to hinder the enemy's privateers (Thucydides roundly calls them "pirates," but we must remember that even up to this date piracy had scarcely lost its credit as a profession for "gentlemen adventurers") "from making those harbours their rendezvous for attacking the merchant-vessels on their voyage from Phasêlis and Phœnicia."

The first movement in the third campaign was made by the Peloponnesians, not by a raid as before into the Athenian borders, but by an expedition in full force, under the Spartan king Archidamus, against the independent town of Platæa, which enjoyed the intimate alliance and protection of Athens. The Thebans had not forgotten their ill-fated attempt upon the city two years before, and the massacre of the prisoners: and they were no doubt clamorous among the allies for revenge. When the invaders had pitched their camp and sent out their plundering parties, the Platæans earnestly remonstrated. They reminded the Spartan king that the independence of their little state had been guaranteed to them for ever by his own countryman Pausanias, in gratitude for that memorable victory gained within sight of their walls, when he with their help had liberated Greece from the Medes; and they adjured him not to violate so solemn an engagement. There is some sophistry in the Spartan's answer:—

"Ye speak fair enough, men of Platæa, if ye do but act as ye speak. Enjoy your independence yourselves, even as Pausanias gave it, and assist us in giving independence to your neighbours,—to all who shared the danger then and swore the same oaths, and are now under the power of the Athenians. It is to free them and others from this yoke, that this warlike array has been set on foot. So take your part in it,—so will you best abide by your sworn faith. Or if you cannot do this, then remain quiet, as we at first invited you, occupy your own borders, and take part with neither side, admitting both as friends, but for military operations neither. And this will content us."—(II. 72.)

The Platæans held a public council before they gave their answer. They could do nothing, they said, without consulting Athens, for there they had bestowed their wives and children; nor, even should they adopt the neutral policy proposed, could they depend on the Thebans respecting it. Archidamus made them another proposal: let them migrate from Platæa, and give up their lands and their property into the hands of the Lacedæmonians, who would maintain them so long as the war should last wherever they chose to fix themselves, and restore all to them when it was over. The Platæans asked leave to refer this proposition to Athens; and there they received assurances of support, so long as they maintained their fealty. Then, speaking from their walls, as not trusting themselves in any further negotiation, they made answer to the Spartans that to accept their terms was "impossible."

Thereupon, after an appeal to the gods to defend the right, Archidamus began the memorable siege of Platæa: the earliest of which we possess any details that can be called historical. It is described by the writer with the minutest particulars, which he must have heard from some one who took part in it. How the enemy surrounded the city with a wooden palisade made out of the fruit-trees which had already been cut down: how they brought larger timber from the forests of the neighbouring Mount Cithæron, and built an inclined plane, into which earth was rammed, against a part of the town-wall, in order to enter the place by storm, working at it in relays for seventy days and seventy nights: how the besieged on their part raised their wall higher from the inside at the point where the danger threatened, pulling down houses to obtain material, and protecting the face of the work with raw hides against the fire-arrows armed with lighted tow: how they undermined the mound that was rising against them, by boring into it through the bottom of their own wall and carrying away the earth inside: and how, when this device was discovered, and the mound still rose higher and higher, they began a new wall, in an inverted segment of a circle, within the old one, so that the enemy would gain nothing even when this latter was won. The Peloponnesians made a final effort, which had nearly succeeded, by throwing lighted fagots and other combustibles over into the town: but a heavy thunderstorm came at the critical moment (at least, "it is so reported") to the aid of the beseiged.

Part of the army then left, and the siege became an

investment. The wooden palisade was replaced by a double wall with a covered-way between, and connecting watch-towers at intervals, and a ditch on either side: it was well understood that the blockade was likely to be a long one. Inside the place were four hundred Platæans and eighty Athenians—all fighting men: the non-combatants had been sent away long before, excepting a hundred and ten women to make bread. Our author leaves them in this position for eighteen months, in order to preserve his yearly tabulation of events; but this interrupts too much the reader's interest in his story.

The close investment did its work effectually; and the troops within the walls, few as they were, began to suffer from the want of provisions, and saw little hope of aid from without. They determined on an attempt to escape. The double wall of circumvallation which their enemies had drawn round them, in order to be effectual for its purpose, had to be strictly guarded and patrolled; and the Platæans had found out that in the wet and cold nights the patrols were in the habit of retiring under cover of the towers. Their plans were formed accordingly: scaling-ladders were prepared, and they watched an opportunity to make an attempt to pass over the double fortification under cover of a stormy night. Half of them lost their taste afterwards for so desperate an attempt; two hundred and twenty persevered in their resolution, and succeeded. It is one of the historian's most graphic narratives, well-known in substance, but scarcely better told than in his own words:—

"When all was ready, they waited for a stormy night with wind and rain, and when there was no moon, and so set out, the contrivers of the attempt leading the way. And first they crossed the ditch which girdled them on their own side, and got to the enemy's wall, without attracting the notice of the watch, since these could not see far through the darkness, and did not hear the sound of their approach because the noise of the wind drowned it. They moved, too, at careful distance from each other, that their arms might not clash together and so make their movements heard. They were in very light marching order, with the left foot only shod, so as to give them safe footing in the mud. So they made for the battlements in the mid-space between two of the towers, satisfied that they should find these deserted. First came those who bore the ladders, and planted them; then twelve of the light company mounted, armed with dagger and breastplate only, led by Ammias son of Corœbus, who was the first to mount; after him the rest followed and reached the top, making for each of the towers. Other light-armed soldiers followed, with nothing but short spears,—their shields, in order that they might mount the quicker, being carried by others behind them, who were to pass them to their owners when they engaged the enemy. When a good many had got up, the guard from within the towers heard them; for one of the Platæans, in laying hold of the battlement, displaced a tile from it, which rattled as it fell. At once the alarm was shouted, and the enemy rushed from their lines to the walls; for they did not

know what the alarm meant, in the dark night and in the storm. At the same moment the Platæans who had been left in the town sallied out, and attacked the enemy's line of circumvallation on the side opposite to that where their comrades were climbing over, to divert attention as much as possible from them. The enemy were bewildered, therefore, and remained at their several quarters; and no man ventured to leave his own station to support the others, but all were at a loss to make out what was going on. Even the three hundred who had been told off to give support at any point where it was required, went outside their works to the quarter whence the shouts proceeded. Fire-signals of alarm were made to Thebes; but the Platæans lighted several beacons on their walls which had been prepared for the purpose, so that the signals might be unintelligible to the enemy, and they might not march to the aid of their friends, but might fancy the state of affairs to be anything but what it really was, until the fugitives shall have got clear away and reached a place of safety.

"Meanwhile, as to the Platæans who were scaling the wall, as soon as the foremost of them had got up and made themselves masters of both the towers, and slain the guard, they posted themselves at the thoroughfare at each of the towers, so as to let no one pass through to the rescue. They then planted ladders from the wall against the towers, and so sent up a good many of their men. Those on the towers and under them kept off any that were coming to the rescue; while the main body, having planted addi-

tional ladders, and also pulled down some of the battlements, were climbing over the works in the space between the towers. Each man, as he got over, took his place on the edge of the ditch, and from that position they kept off with arrows and javelins any who might come along the side of the wall to hinder the crossing. When all had crossed over, then the men from the towers — the hindmost not without difficulty—descended and got on the ditch. Meanwhile the guard of three hundred were coming up with torches. Now the Platæans, standing in the shadow on the edge of the ditch, got a good sight of them, and launched their arrows and javelins against them as they stood exposed; while, keeping in the dark as they did themselves, they were all the less visible for the torch-light, so that even the last of their party succeeded in passing the ditch; not, however, without much toil and difficulty, for there was ice formed on it, not strong enough to bear, but somewhat slushy, as is commonly the case with an easterly wind; and as there was snow falling that night with this wind, it produced a great deal of water in the ditch, which they had to cross up to their necks. Still, it was in great measure owing to the violence of the storm that they succeeded in escaping."—(III. 23.)

The attempt was carried out with the same combination of daring and forethought to the end. The fugitives made straight for Thebes, "thinking that the Peloponnesians would never dream of their taking that road into an enemy's country;" and it must have been

with a grim satisfaction that they "saw their pursuers moving with torches along the road to Athens," which they naturally were supposed to have taken, and which place they did reach eventually by striking off into the mountains. Two hundred and twelve got clear away, out of two hundred and twenty who had left the town. Some few had lost heart at the outset, and turned back; one had been taken prisoner; but not a single life appears to have been lost in the gallant adventure. Those whose courage had failed them told their comrades in the town that all the rest of the party had been slain; and it was not until the garrison sent into the enemy's lines next morning for the usual permission to "bury their dead," that they learned they had no dead to bury.

The investment was continued, and still the defenders held out; but though the gallant exploit which has been related had left fewer mouths to be fed, the stock of provisions within the walls was at last exhausted. The escape of the two hundred had also weakened the little garrison: and the commander of the Lacedæmonian forces was well aware that he could take the place any day by storm. He would not do so, for a curious strategic reason. It was usual, in Greek negotiations at the close of a war, to agree to restore all conquests on both sides, but not such places as had come over by voluntary capitulation: and the Lacedæmonians hoped by this means to retain the town of Platæa as a permanent acquisition.

Driven thus to extremities, at the end of two years of close blockade, the few remaining defenders at last

surrendered at discretion. That is, they agreed to leave the decision of their fate to judges sent from Lacedæmon, who should "punish the guilty, but no one contrary to justice." What the Lacedæmonian ideas of justice were they soon learnt by terrible experience. Five special commissioners arrived from Lacedæmon. No charge was brought forward against the garrison: they were simply asked, "Had they, during the present war, done any service in any way to the Lacedæmonians or their allies?" There could be only one answer: the question meant a judicial murder: and the prisoners asked leave to defend themselves. One of the earliest critics of Thucydides—Dionysius of Halicarnassus—reckons this defence as one of the finest specimens of his oratory.

They feared—they said—that their fate was determined already: they were to be sacrificed to the vengeance of Thebes. Yet they would remind the allies of their good service done to Greece in old times, when Thebes had betrayed it. If they found themselves now ranged on the side of Athens, it was because Lacedæmon had rejected their application for aid when hard pressed by their enemies the Thebans: and it was the Thebans who had now attacked them first, and that in a time of peace. It would be a monstrous thing to blot from the community of Greece a town whose name had been inscribed, by the national gratitude, on the votive tripod at Delphi. Such a deed would be a stain on the character of Lacedæmon for ever. There is much pathos in their concluding words:—

"But we must bring this pleading to a close—hard as that is, when we feel our lives are in peril of closing with it. We have done: only protesting, that it was not to the Thebans we surrendered our city—rather than that, we would have preferred to die by famine, most wretched as it is of all deaths; it was to you we trusted, when we gave in. It were but fair, then, if we fail to persuade you, to put us back in the position in which we were, and let us take our choice of the fate that may await us. We adjure you not to let us Platæans, once so zealous in the defence of Greece, now suppliants here before you, Lacedæmonians, be delivered up out of your hands and your pledged honour to our bitterest enemies, the Thebans: nay, be our preservers rather, and do not, while giving freedom to the other Greeks, leave us to destruction."—(III. 59.)

The Thebans feared the effect of this appeal. They replied—or Thucydides replies—at considerable length. How far these speeches, as we have them, represent what was actually said, can be only matter of conjecture. Mitford holds, with good reason, that they are "not likely to have been very exactly reported;" Grote places "full confidence in them, so far as the substance goes." The form and arrangement of both the defence and the rejoinder show that the historian would himself have made an admirable pleader.

The Platæans had claimed credit, said their accusers, for not "Medising" at the time of the great war: but they would have joined the Medes if the

Athenians had. And they (the Thebans) had not "Medised" as a state—it was the act only of a small despotic faction. They had shown their regard for the liberties of Greece by their steadfast opposition to the encroachments of Athens—as dangerous an enemy to liberty as ever the Persian was. The real traitors to Greece were those who, like the Platæans, followed willingly the lead of Athens in all her ambitious designs, instead of joining the general league against her, or preserving neutrality as they had been urged to do. As to the attack made on their city, of which they complained, the Thebans had come there on the invitation of some of the chief men in Platæa itself, who were desirous of joining the Bœotian confederacy: they had come in peace, to proclaim a new constitution; they had been received as enemies, and their men, in violation of a solemn promise, treacherously massacred. For this they now demanded vengeance—"in order that men might learn in future not to seek fair excuses for evil deeds."

The Lacedæmonian commission decided that the men of Platæa, having rejected the position of neutrals which had been repeatedly and formally offered them, had placed themselves outside the laws of war—such as they were. They put to each man singly the hopeless question, "Had he done any service to them or to their allies?" And as each made the only answer that was possible, he was led away to death. Two hundred Platæans and twenty-five Athenians who formed part of the garrison were thus killed in cold blood. The Athenians, in whose cause they died,

seem to have made no effort to save them, nor to have entered any special protest against the deed. Thucydides narrates the bare fact here, as he does the slaughter of the citizens of Mitylenè, in a few words, without an expression of censure in either case. It seems quite possible that public opinion, among the Greeks of those days, saw in such treatment of their prisoners of war nothing to call for exceptional reprobation. The women who had remained within the walls were sold as slaves, the town itself razed to the ground, and the name of Platæa was for the present, as its citizens had so pathetically foreboded, "blotted out of the national family of Greeks."* It was all done, says Thucydides, to gratify the unrelenting enmity of the Thebans, whose support in this war was felt to be of the utmost importance by their Peloponnesian allies.

* It was restored and garrisoned by the Spartans forty years afterwards, as a blow to the pride of Thebes, with which state they were then at war; was again destroyed utterly by the Thebans, and restored again by Alexander.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FATE OF MITYLENE.

In the same year in which the siege of Platæa was begun (B.C. 429) the Athenians met with a serious reverse in an expedition against the revolted Chalcidians in Thrace, in which they lost above 400 of their best men and all their generals. It was far more than compensated by the two brilliant victories won for them in the Corinthian gulf by Phormio (unquestionably the ablest of all their admirals in this war) over the confederate fleet—chiefly made up from Corinth and Sicyon. This was the first serious trial of naval strength between the two parties since the affair off Corcyra. In the first of the two sea-fights the confederates (who had forty-five ships against twenty) adopted a singular formation to await the attack of the Athenians. They formed their ships into a circle, with their prows outwards and their sterns in, as wide as they could without giving the enemy room to sail through. Inside they stationed all the small craft which accompanied the expedition, and also five of their fastest war-galleys, which were to move out at once and give support at any point where the enemy

might attack. Neither this ingenious plan, nor their great superiority in numbers, saved them from an utter defeat. In fact, in the position they had taken up, their numbers did but hamper them in a rough sea. Phormio, with his faster galleys and better-trained crews, kept moving round the outside of their circle, "knowing that he could choose his own moment for attack," and waiting for the increased breeze which generally came with the dawn. It came, and the confederate ships were unable to keep their distances: the circle grew narrower and narrower, and their vessels fouled each other. Then Phormio saw his opportunity, and won an easy victory. Thereupon the confederate admirals were practically superseded by having "counsellors" (like the French republican "commissioners") sent to them from Sparta. But, in spite of commissioners and strong reinforcements, the result of a second engagement, under even a greater disparity of strength than before, was equally disastrous. It was in vain that the Spartan commissioners made an earnest harangue to the fleet,—introducing a point which, as Grote has well observed, "was rarely touched upon by generals on the eve of battle," and which showed a consciousness that their men had but little heart to fight the Athenians again. "We shall make at least as good dispositions for battle as your late commanders, and we will give no man an excuse for being a coward: if any choose so to be, he shall be punished as he deserves." The vicissitudes of this second engagement were remarkable, and are told in the historian's most lucid style. Phormio had still but his

twenty galleys, while the enemy had now collected seventy-five. It was therefore his object to avoid a battle—especially where he had not much sea-room—until his own reinforcements could come up. The manœuvres continued for six days. Then the confederates made a feint against Naupactus, an Athenian settlement within the gulf, which was quite undefended. This drew Phormio into the narrower water, in his anxiety to protect the town: and then the Peloponnesians suddenly changed their course, cut off nine of his ships, and drove them ashore.

"Meanwhile their own twenty ships of the right wing [these were the fastest sailers] went in chase of the eleven Athenian galleys which had made their escape, when the sudden change of course took place, into the wider channel. But all except one succeeded in making Naupactus before they were overtaken, and ranged themselves in line, with their prows outwards, off the temple of Apollo, prepared for action in case the enemy should follow them under the land. They came up presently, and were singing the pæan as they sailed, considering that they had won a victory, and the one Athenian galley that lagged behind the others was being chased by a Leucadian, which was far ahead of her consorts. Now there chanced to be a merchant-vessel riding at anchor in deep water, round which the Athenian, being sufficiently in advance, made a sharp turn, struck the Leucadian that was chasing her amidships, and so sank her. There fell a panic on the Peloponnesians at this sudden and un-

looked-for exploit; so much so, that running in chase as they were without much order, in all the confidence of victory, some of their galleys even stopped rowing and did not continue their course, waiting for the main squadron—the worst thing they could have done, with the enemy at such close quarters—and some, from want of knowing the coast, got into shoal-water. When the Athenians saw all this, their courage rose, and with one unanimous shout they raised their battle-cry and made at them. What with their unlucky mistakes, and the confusion they had now got into, the enemy stood their ground but a very little while, and then turned and made for Panormus, whence they had started. The Athenians followed in chase, took six of the nearest galleys, and recovered their own which the enemy had driven ashore at the beginning of the battle, and taken in tow. Of the men, they killed some, and some few they made prisoners. Now on board the Leucadian galley, which was sunk by the turn round the merchantman, was Timocrates the Lacedæmonian: when the ship was sinking, he stabbed himself, and his body was washed ashore in the harbour at Naupactus."—(II. 91, 92.)

The confederate admirals now sought to retrieve their defeat by a bold stroke in another direction. So confident were the Athenians, according to their historian, of their superiority at sea, that their port and arsenal at Piræus had been left wholly unprotected. It was resolved to make a sudden dash upon it. As the siege of Platæa had been undertaken to

gratify the Thebans, so this stab at the very heart of Athens was suggested by the bitterest of her enemies and the greatest sufferer in her home market by the Athenian blockading ships. It was from Megara the suggestion came. The crews from the allied fleet marched overland to Nisæa, the Megarian port, manned forty vessels which lay there, and set sail—but not direct for Athens; they stopped to sack the island of Salamis by the way. They said it was an unfavourable wind that delayed them: but they might have sailed into the harbour of Athens easily enough—"if they had had the spirit not to hesitate, and the wind would not have hindered it"—is the contemptuous criticism of the military historian. As it was, the fire-signals from Salamis gave warning to Athens of the danger; at dawn the home fleet moved out to meet the enemy at Salamis, while the land-troops mounted guard at the harbour.

The confederates contented themselves with their plunder, and returned in all haste to Nisæa, whence they had started. "Their galleys also caused them some uneasiness, as they had been lying high and dry for some time, and were anything but water-tight." So little did their admirals seem to have known of the very essentials of naval warfare. The Athenians took the warning, and secured their harbour by a boom, or something of the kind, and took other precautions for its future defence.

Towards the winter of the year, Sitalces of Thrace made an important expedition against Perdiccas of Macedonia, partly as a diversion in favour of his

allies the Athenians. He led with him an enormous force, swelled on the march, by the contingents of the various tribes who more or less acknowledged his sovereignty, till it reached 150,000 men. An Athenian naval squadron was to have co-operated on the coast: but, as is the case so often with combined operations, the dispositions failed. The expedition was undertaken so late in the year, that the Athenians —not believing, says Thucydides, that their allies would undertake it at all—never despatched a fleet, but only envoys and complimentary presents. The Thracian king entered into negotiations with the Macedonian, and the invading host returned as it came, after thirty days of ravaging and plunder.

Phormio and his victorious fleet returned to Athens at the close of the winter with the captured ships and prisoners. The freemen among them, we are told, were exchanged by regular cartel with the enemy. The slaves would be reckoned with the other materials of war, and their condition would not be much affected, whether they worked for Athens or Sparta.

The following campaign began as usual. "As soon as the corn was ripe," Archidamus and his allies made their third inroad on the fields of Attica. The Athenian cavalry kept them somewhat in check, and prevented them from carrying their destruction into the immediate neighbourhood of the city.

This year was marked by the revolt from Athenian rule of the important island of Lesbos (B.C. 428). Its powerful capital, Mitylenè, had long been impatient of a dependent position, and had contemplated

such a movement even before the war, but was waiting to be better prepared. Events were somewhat hastened in consequence of the Athenians receiving warning of the design from Methymna, the one town in the island which remained faithful to its allegiance. At first they were loath to believe in such an alarming addition to their difficulties, "crippled as they were already by the war and the pestilence;" but they found the news was too true, and sent to demand of the islanders to give up their fleet and dismantle their new fortifications. They flatly refused, and even risked a battle with the Athenian fleet sent to enforce the demand. As was to be expected, their raw sailors were easily beaten; and then—anxious to save their fleet, if possible — the Mityleneans asked for terms, which the Athenian commanders were willing to grant, "having fears on their own part that they were not strong enough to carry on hostilities against all Lesbos united." The Lesbians sent delegates to Athens to negotiate; but, at the same time, having no great confidence in the result, they sent an embassy to ask help from Sparta.

Their envoys were admitted to an audience at Olympia, at the great national festival of Greece. Their spokesman is reported as defending his countrymen against any charge Athens might bring against them of a breach of faith. They were conscious that their case might have an ugly look, even in the eyes of the enemies of Athens; that "it might possibly seem somewhat base, after being treated honourably in time of peace, to revolt from her in her hour of danger." But

they professed to be alarmed at the prospect of the future. They had admitted the suzerainty of Athens, in order to defend the liberties of Greece against the Persians; but Athens had gradually reduced all her weaker allies under as complete a despotism as the Persian. Were they to wait until, when their possible allies had all been reduced to this state, they should themselves be the last to be absorbed? The only chance for Lesbos was to anticipate their would-be tyrants, and strike a blow for liberty before their chance grew desperate. Naturally, they said, they were speaking for their own interests; but none the less was it for the interest of Sparta to embrace the opportunity, and attack her great enemy where she was most vulnerable, in and by the means of one of her most important colonies. There is no word of real complaint as to the treatment of the islanders by the sovereign state. True, it may be said that, though the defence is put into the mouth of a Mitylenean, the language is really that of Thucydides the Athenian; but there is no reason here or elsewhere to suspect him of unfairness, and there is nothing on record to show that the bearing of Athens towards her subject-allies was not exercised for their interests as well as for her own. When the catastrophe of the revolt comes to be considered, it is well to bear all its circumstances in mind.

The arguments of the Mitylenean envoys, whatever they were worth, fell upon very willing ears. The island was received into the confederation, and the Lacedæmonians took occasion of the supposed Athenian difficulties to order an invasion of Attica by the

several contingents in strong force. But Athens made an immense effort to meet the occasion. Without moving a galley from Lesbos, they raised a levy *en masse* of all except the very highest rank of citizens, and equipped a fleet of a hundred sail to face the astonished Lacedæmonians. The latter found their allies not nearly so forward as themselves. "They were busy gathering in their harvest; they were sick of expeditions into Attica;" and so the appointed gathering at the Isthmus proved a failure, and the Lacedæmonians went home. At the same time, the Mitylenæans made an unsuccessful attempt to reduce their impracticable neighbour, Methymna, which maintained a stubborn loyalty to Athens. But they were soon themselves closely invested by the Athenian admiral, Paches, who was sent there with a large force, and who drew a line of circumvallation round the town, while his fleet strictly blockaded their harbour. A Lacedæmonian envoy nevertheless succeeded in creeping in through a water-course, and bade them hold out, for that the allies would make a strong diversion in their favour by an invasion of Attica in force.

The invasion of the Athenian territory, which the Lacedæmonians had promised should soon distract the attention and the forces of their enemy from the siege of Mitylenè, took place in the spring. It was headed by the Spartan Cleomenes, now acting as regent for his nephew Pleistoanax, who was yet a minor. "They ravaged," says our author, "not only the districts which they had laid waste before, wherever anything had grown again, but all that they had left unvisited in

their former incursions: and this was the sorest raid of all for the Athenians, except the second." But nothing could force Athens to relax her grasp upon her revolted dependency; and the garrison of Mitylenè, suffering now from famine, and still seeing no aid from Sparta, made such terms as they could with Paches. They opened their gates to his army, and only bargained that he should put none of them to death or sell them for slaves, till they should have had an opportunity of pleading their cause at Athens. Thither the leading citizens, who had taken an active part in the movement for independence, were sent for public trial. Seven days too late, the Lacedæmonian fleet, so long expected, but which had been wasting the days so precious to the Mityleneans in some minor operations, arrived in the neighbourhood only to find the city in the hands of the enemy.

There was no hesitation at Athens as to the punishment of the men whom they looked upon in the light of the most ungrateful of all their dependants. The public vote was for death, not only to the citizens whom Paches had selected and sent home as most deeply implicated in the revolt, but to all Mityleneans who were able to bear arms—probably not less than six thousand—and slavery to their women and children. But this hasty popular vote was followed, as is not unfrequently the case, by something like a popular repentance; and the Mitylenean deputies and their few friends at Athens took advantage of the feeling to get the question brought forward afresh. And here Thucydides first brings into view a man who played

a leading part in the commons of Athens—who was better abused, probably, than any man of his day, figuring not merely in the pages of history, but as the never-failing subject of satirical comedy—with whom the fortunes of Thucydides himself are thought to have been very closely connected, and as to whose real character historians and scholars widely differ to this day. He is introduced to us with an abruptness more common with early than with recent historians, simply by name—Cleon, son of Cleænetus—as the uncompromising supporter, from first to last, of a policy of extermination towards revolted subjects. Such character as Thucydides here gives of him is summed up in a very few words—"One of the most violent of the citizens in every way, and at that time possessing unbounded influence with the commons." He speaks of him again, in a subsequent passage, as a dishonest politician and a reckless slanderer;* but, as will be seen hereafter, there are reasons for receiving the historian's judgment in this particular case with some degree of caution. This Cleon was a man of the people in every sense—he, or at least his father, was said to have been a tanner—and he undoubtedly possessed, as would be admitted both by his enemies and his apologists, the popular gifts of a strong voice and a fluent tongue; to which might be added the no less popular qualifications of abundant self-confidence, unqualified opinions, and unscrupulous dealing with opponents. Not what either Athenian or English politicians would call a "gentleman," by any means; but an able

* V. 16.

and vigorous debater, and a party chief of unquestionable power. He had already, before our historian introduces him, worked his way into public notice as an opponent of Pericles, and probably was one of the many who, without that great statesman's qualifications, aimed at succeeding to his place in Athens. He now came forward to denounce in the strongest terms the weak-minded policy which would reverse the merciless but (as he argued) just decree which had been passed against Mitylenè. How far his speech on the second discussion, which Thucydides gives at length, is real or imaginary, we cannot tell; but it may at least be received as setting forth the view taken of the case by a large party at Athens.

Very much of his harangue sounds like a succession of ironical paradoxes, from the mouth of such a speaker. We might believe that it embodied rather the opinions of Thucydides himself than those of the popular demagogue. Cleon sets forth the danger of allowing eloquent speakers to turn the Assembly from their sober judgment: he puts before them a picture of themselves which was not far from the truth, but which we should not expect to find thus drawn by the hand of a popular leader. Then he proceeds:—

"You conduct these political debates on false principles. You attend such discussions as you would a theatre, — as a mere audience, and you take your facts from hearsay; deciding on the feasibility of any enterprise from the language of some plausible orator, and for your view of past events depending not so

much on the evidence of your own eyes as on the criticisms of clever theorists: readier than any men I know to be taken in by a specious paradox, and to shrink from carrying out what you have solemnly determined; ever the slaves of the last new whim, scorners of sober use and wont. What each would like best is to be an orator himself; or, if that cannot be, then you vie, as it were, with the orators so far as not to seem to be following their lead in thought, but to anticipate any clever turn by your applause, and to be quick in catching the sense of what is suggested before the words are spoken,—as you are slow to foresee their possible consequences. You are always seeking for something grander, if I may so express it, than the facts of daily life, yet lack common-sense to judge of the facts before your eyes. In short, you are taken captive by the pleasures of the ear, and you are more like an audience sitting at a disputation of rhetoricians, than men gravely consulting on affairs of state."—(III. 38.)

It is Thucydides, surely — the grave and caustic aristocratical politician—who delivers himself of these home truths to his countrymen; not the demagogue whom he at least represents as the mob-orator, swaying their passions by violent language, and reckless of all political morality. This portion of Cleon's reputed speech reads almost like a passage from Aristophanes paraphrased into sounding prose,—where that wonderful satirist is sketching the character and habits of this very same commons of Athens, as led away and deluded by this man Cleon and others of his type. However,

after this remarkable exordium, the speaker goes on to state the case very forcibly, and with no manifest unfairness, against the unhappy Mityleneans. They had no excuse: they had no complaint to make against Athens, by their own confession; they had been living in practical independence, under their own laws, treated with all honour and consideration; if Athens had done wrong at all, it was in treating them better than her other dependencies; "for it is the common trick of human nature to despise those who pay us court, and to look up with respect to those who never stoop an inch to us." He contends that justice, as well as the interest of Athens, called for signal punishment of these wanton rebels. "By a weaker course you will fail to conciliate them, while you will condemn yourselves; for if they did right to revolt, then you had no right to rule. And if you are determined, even without such right, to maintain your dominion, you must also so far disregard right, and punish these men from expediency; or else throw up your dominion, and adopt the high moral tone when you can do so in safe obscurity."—"Punish them, then, as they deserve, and make of them an unmistakable example to your other dependencies, that the penalty for revolt, in any case, is death. If once they feel this, you will not so often have to hold your hands from your enemies in order to defend yourselves against your allies."

Cleon's speech was answered by one Diodotus—of whom we know nothing besides. Even he, while he strongly urges on his countrymen some modification of the terrible decree, does so on the ground of political

expediency,—not of mercy. "As for pity or indulgence," he says, "I would not have you swayed at all by such considerations." So comparatively modern a feeling is mercy, as a general rule, to a conquered enemy, especially when that enemy had once stood in the position of a friend. But a mistaken severity in this case, Diodotus argues, far from stamping out rebellion, might defeat its own object: it might drive to desperation any dependency which might possibly revolt in the future. Again, if they included the commons of Mitylene in the punishment, as had been decreed, they would be sacrificing the immense advantage which Athens now possessed, of being looked upon more or less as a friend by the commons of every state: she would lose the support in such cases of the masses, now almost always inclined to her interests. Let them put the leading citizens, whom Paches had sent home as the most guilty, formally on their trial, and let the rest live unharmed.—(III. 40.)

By a very small majority, the milder proposal of Diodotus was carried in the Assembly. But the order for the summary execution of all the citizens had been despatched the evening before to the admiral at Mitylenè, and the galley which carried it was already far on her way. Then began a race for life and death.

"At once they despatched another vessel in all haste, fearing that unless this second outstripped the other, it would find the town and its inhabitants already destroyed: for the first had the start by about a day and a night. The Mitylenean delegates had supplied the

second galley liberally with meal and wine, and promised large bounties to the rowers if they reached the island first; the men ate, as they sat at their oars, a mixture of meal with wine and oil, rowing and sleeping by relays. And as there chanced to be no wind against them, and the first galley made no great haste, as upon a hateful errand, while the other pressed on in this fashion, the one arrived only just so much in advance that Paches had read the letter containing the decree, and was about to put the order into execution, when the second reached shore after it, and stopped the massacre. So narrowly did Mitylenè escape from peril."—(III. 49.)

Even the tender mercies of this war were cruel. The main population of Mitylenè was spared; but those who had been sent prisoners to Athens as having led the revolt were put to death—upwards of a thousand of the most influential citizens. The fortifications of the place were dismantled, and its fleet confiscated. The whole island of Lesbos, except the one faithful town of Methymna, was divided into lots, which were assigned to Athenian citizens, who let them out to be farmed by the natives. If a terrible example could have bound the allies of Athens to their allegiance, the fate of Lesbos might well have afforded it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TERROR AT CORCYRA.

THE island of Corcyra was again to be the scene of troubles in which both the great contending Powers were concerned. Corinth had not lost sight of her ambitious and refractory daughter. Her fleet had carried off from the island, after the sea-fight at the beginning of the war, some 8000 prisoners.* Of these, 250 belonged to the highest families; and these, probably to their own surprise, while their meaner countrymen were all sold for slaves, found themselves well treated, and held in a kind of honourable safe-custody at Corinth. The Corinthians had their own object in view. In the fifth year of the war these men were sent home to their island, nominally on bail for a large promised ransom, but really, says Thucydides, "on condition of their undertaking to bring over the island to the Corinthians." They began by diplomatic intrigues; but they found the democratic party strong in the interests of Athens. Then followed a succession of the most bloody revolutions and counter-revolutions. The aristocrats had recourse

* See p. 22.

to the "gospel of the dagger;" and having got rid in this fashion of their leading opponents, maintained themselves for a while in power. The arrival of envoys from Corinth encouraged the commons to rise upon their new masters; slaves were armed and promised liberty by both parties; street-fighting went on from day to day, with all the bitter ferocity which marks the struggles of men of the same blood when divided into hostile factions, the women of the proletariat taking their share in the fight, and hurling tiles from the houses on the heads of the aristocrats below. These latter, to cut off the approach to the arsenal which they held, set the town on fire. Fleets arrived both from Athens and the Peloponnese, to watch the turn of events, and take such measures as they might in support of their own partisans amongst the Corcyræans. But the Athenians were in too small force to do more than save the Corcyræan fleet from utter destruction in a fight which ensued against an overwhelming Peloponnesian force which drove them back into their harbour. But when a new admiral was sent out from Athens, the confederates—not daring to meet the naval strength of Athens upon anything like equal terms—sailed off towards home, leaving their unhappy friends of the aristocratical party to the mercy of their political enemies. Then, while the Athenian admiral Eurymedon coldly looked on from the harbour, for seven days a reign of terror prevailed at Corcyra. The commons, aided by foreign mercenaries, massacred every man whom they chose to consider an "aristocrat."

"They denounced them," says the historian, "as conspirators against the people; but many lost their lives owing to some private grudge, and others because money was owed them by their captors. And death was inflicted in all varieties of form; and no one horrible detail was omitted of all that is wont to happen in such a state of things,—and even more than this, for father killed son, and men were dragged from sanctuaries, or murdered in them: some even were walled up in the temple of Bacchus, and died there. So savage had the feud become."—(III. 81.)

It has been said with some truth of this history in general that its tone is cold and cynical—that, as a rule, the historian seems to occupy the position of a looker-on at the deadly strife that is rending the very heart of Greece, studying and describing its features something after the fashion in which a modern lecturer in anatomy is supposed to watch the struggles of some animal on whom he is making an experiment,—interested only in the demonstrations of his science, and insensible to, or careless of, the sufferings of its victims. It may be that to such an impassive and philosophical spirit we owe much of the admitted truthfulness of the narrative. But when Thucydides comes to record these days of terror at Corcyra, he checks the steady current of his narrative to draw a picture of the times which becomes all the more impressive because it comes from the hand of a keen observer who was not carried away by any sentimental enthusiasm, or tempted to write for sensational effect. In the remarkable chapters

which follow, and to which any translation can do but scant justice, though he has Corcyra and its factions before him as his immediate subject and example, it is plain that he speaks of a phase of national character which was fast being developed throughout all Greece by this civil war—for such, in many of its most deplorable features, was this struggle between Hellenic states which claimed a common origin, spoke a common language, and appealed to a common religion. The factions at Corcyra, which furnish the text of these chapters, have been not inaptly compared to the revolutionary "Clubs" of Paris; but this great difference must be borne in mind, that they were not peculiar to the democratic party.

"The states thus torn by faction displayed beyond all precedent a novelty of invention both in elaborating plots and in monstrous acts of vengeance. And men changed at will the ordinary meaning of words, to suit their actions. For unscrupulous daring was termed brave and good comradeship; a prudent hesitation was but specious cowardice; a general moderation was a general uselessness. A mad impetuosity was the proof of a manly spirit; caution in any enterprise was a sign of drawing back. The man who urged to cruelty was a trusty citizen; the man who would dissuade from it became himself suspected. He who plotted and succeeded was clever; he who suspected plots was cleverer still: while he who would have so ordered matters as that no plot should be necessary, was charged with breaking up his party, and being

afraid of his opponents. In short, the man who could forestall others in the commission of a crime, and he who incited to crime another who had never thought of it, were alike commended. Moreover, the ties of blood were not so close as the ties of party, because this latter bond found men readier for the most unscrupulous action. For such associations are formed not under the protection of ordinary laws, but in defiance of all established law, in the interests of selfish ambition: and fidelity between their members rests not on any sacred principle, but on the fact of having been accomplices in crime. Any fair proposal from an adversary was received with a cautious eye to his possible future action, not in any generous spirit.* Revenge upon an enemy was more highly valued than the having received no injury to avenge. And if oaths were employed at any time to ratify a convention, they were taken by either party only because there was no alternative at the moment, and held good just so long as that party gained no new strength; but as soon as a chance offered, whichever had the boldness first to seize it, if he could catch the other unprepared, wreaked his vengeance on him with more relish, on account of the pledge between them, than if it had been after fair warning; and congratulated himself not only on the safe opportunity he had found for an attack, but

* Arnold, in a note on this passage, appositely quotes a modern illustration: "'Ne vous fiez-vous pas à la parole du roi?' lui disait M. de Lionne dans une conférence. 'J'ignore ce que veut le roi,' dit Van Brunnig; 'je considère ce qu'il peut.'" —Voltaire, Siècle de Louis XIV., ch. 9.

on the credit he should gain for cleverness besides, in having so cunningly overreached him. . . . So no party recognised any religious obligation, but those who succeeded in effecting some odious purpose under fair pretences were held in all the higher esteem. They who stood neutral became the victims of both parties—either because they would not join them, or out of jealousy that they should so escape. Thus, in consequence of these party factions, every species of baseness began to obtain throughout Greece, and simplicity, which goes most commonly with a noble nature, was ridiculed, and disappeared; and the general habit was for men to stand on their guard against each other in a mutual distrust. For in settling a quarrel no man's word could be trusted, and no oath was held in awe."—(III. 82, 83.)

The chapter which follows, and in which the state of morals induced by such revolutions as that in Corcyra is still further discussed, has given rise to a curious and interesting question. The old commentators detected peculiarities in its style and expressions which satisfied them of its not being the work of Thucydides himself, but only a clever imitation. Their opinion is endorsed by modern scholars: Arnold even calls it "a caricature of his style and manner." It seems probable that it was inserted by a Christian student of Thucydides, of whom there were very many at Constantinople between the fourth and seventh centuries.

It may be convenient once more to break through the historian's arrangement into years, to get a clear

view of the end. The aristocrats of Corcyra were not yet finally disposed of. Some five hundred of them escaped, and with some hired mercenaries fortified themselves on a hill in the island called Istonè. Thence they commanded the country round, cut off supplies from the town, and otherwise harassed their enemies considerably. They asked support in vain from the Corinthians, who had sent them on their forlorn hope of regaining the island, and from the rest of the Peloponnesians whose cause they were serving; but they maintained themselves there for nearly two years, when the place was stormed by an Athenian force, who were landed on the island to relieve their friends in the town from this continual state of local warfare. The little garrison of Istonè retired still higher up the mountain, but were at last obliged to surrender at discretion, agreeing "to abide the judgment of the people of Athens." Such terms did not meet the views of their relentless enemies at home. Emissaries from the democrats enticed some of the prisoners secretly to break their parole, and to make an attempt to escape; told them that the Athenian generals meant to give them up to the mob; and offered them a vessel to escape in. They fell into the snare; were of course taken and brought back: the terms of capitulation were declared to have been violated, and the Athenian commanders gave them up to the tender mercies of their countrymen. Thucydides tells us what followed:—

"When the Corcyræans got them into their hands,

they shut them up in a large building; and afterwards bringing them out by twenty at a time made them pass, fettered together, through two rows of armed soldiers ranged on either side, while they were struck and stabbed by those in the ranks, wherever any man espied a personal enemy; and men walked by the side carrying whips, with which they quickened the pace of any who seemed to move too slowly. As many as sixty they brought out and massacred in this fashion, without its coming to the knowledge of the others inside (for these fancied they were only removing them to some other quarter). But when they discovered the fact, from some one telling them, then they called aloud on the Athenians, and begged that they would slay them, if they willed it so to be. And they would not come out of the building any more, and said they would allow none to enter it so long as they could strike a blow. The Corcyræans had no mind themselves to force the doors, but climbed on the roof of the place, pulled off the tiling, and hurled tiles and shot arrows down on those within. These protected themselves as well as they could, and at the same time the majority began to despatch themselves, by thrusting into their throats the arrows which their enemies had discharged, or hanging themselves with the cordage of some beds which happened to be inside, or cutting strips from their clothes for the purpose. So, through the greater part of the night (for the night came on during this tragedy), they were making away with themselves in one fashion or other, or being shot down by the men on the roof. When it was day, the Corcyræans threw the

bodies, one upon the other, on drays, and carried them outside the town. All the women taken in the fort were sold for slaves. In such fashion were the Corcyræans from the mountain slaughtered by the populace, and the feud which had lasted so long was thus brought to a termination—for of one of the two parties there was scarcely a remnant left worth reckoning."—(IV. 47, 48.)

Eurymedon—the same Athenian admiral who had lain quiet with his fleet in the harbour while a similar scene was enacted two years before—again looked on passively from his ships until his savage allies had glutted their revenge, and then moved off on his way to Sicily.

It is somewhat startling to turn from the calm and dispassionate account which Thucydides gives of the horrors which marked the conduct of both parties in these deadly struggles for power, to the remarks which Mr Grote has made upon them in what he calls "a discriminative criticism." Everything which falls from such an authority is weighty, and must be received with respect. But when we find that he can see little in these Corcyræan horrors but "the work of a selfish oligarchical party, playing the game of a foreign enemy—aiming to subvert the existing democracy and acquire power for themselves, and ready to employ any measure of violence for the attainment of these objects"—when he speaks of the democratic faction as being "thrown upon the defensive," and says that "their conduct as victors is only such as we might

expect in such maddening circumstances,"—we feel that we are not listening to the historian but to the politician. It is fair at least to the ordinary reader to warn him that such a judgment cannot justly be gathered from the pages of Thucydides. He has set before us clearly the bitter fruits of political faction carried to extremes by a fierce and crafty people; the recklessness of human life, the revenge, the cruelty, which marked the age, and which we know was not confined, as Thucydides would seem almost disposed to think, to Greece and its neighbourhood, under the pressure of intestine war. But he nowhere gives us reason to suppose that the guilt could be laid exclusively or mainly to the charge of either party in the struggle,—noble or plebeian, democrat or aristocrat, islander or Athenian.

CHAPTER IX.

DEMOSTHENES AND CLEON.

THESE sixth and seventh years of the war bring into the foreground one of the Athenian "generals at sea" (for this old English appellation perhaps best serves to express the real position of a naval commander of the Greeks) who is to play a considerable part in future operations both by sea and land. Demosthenes first distinguished himself in the summer of B.C. 426, by an attempt at the reduction of some of the Ætolian tribes, in the hope of making his way thence by land into Bœotia, and eventually breaking up altogether the Lacedæmonian interest in Northern Greece. But his attempt was very unfortunate: he was weak in archers and light troops generally, and his regular infantry could make no head against the harassing attacks of the swarms of mountaineers. Their guide was killed, and they lost their way. The main body found itself surrounded in a forest, which was set on fire by the enemy; and besides great loss among the auxiliaries, half the Athenian force fell there, together with the other general, Procles—"the most valuable lives," says Thucydides, "that were lost in all this

war." So much did Demosthenes blame himself for the disaster, that though his ships carried the survivors of the expedition home to Athens, he preferred himself to find some employment at the foreign station of Naupactus, "fearing to face the Athenians after all that had happened."

He retrieved his lost credit by degrees. First, he succeeded in saving Naupactus itself from projected attack by throwing into it reinforcements obtained by his influence with the neighbouring tribes. He was elected commander-in-chief of the native levies of Acarnanians, who had an old grudge to work out against their neighbours the Ambraciots, who were in the opposite interest, and defeated these latter in two important battles, from one of which such heaps of spoil were carried off that three hundred complete suits of armour fell to the share of Demosthenes alone.

He had no fear now of the verdict of his countrymen. When a fleet was under orders next year for Corcyra (as we have seen), and thence for Sicily, Demosthenes, though we are expressly told that he was living quietly as a private citizen since his return, had influence enough to obtain leave to accompany it, with extraordinary powers. He was to make such use of it as he saw occasion on the coasts of the peninsula. No wonder that such an anomalous authority was not cordially recognised by the officers in actual command. He had fixed his heart upon an uninhabited bluff on the south-west coast, some forty-five miles from Sparta, in the old Messenia, called Pylos, overhanging the

harbour well known in the history of modern warfare as Navarino. This point he had a desire to fortify; and there—within their ancestral territory—he had the design of planting some of his friends, the descendants of Messenian exiles in Naupactus, to be a permanent menace and annoyance to their hereditary enemies of Sparta. The actual commanders, Eurymedon and Sophocles, protested against such delay as tending to defeat the great objects of the expedition, and against the project itself as a wild one. But it so happened that a storm drove them into that very harbour; and now Demosthenes again put forward his idea, and again in vain. "There were plenty of unoccupied headlands on the peninsula," said the commanders, "if he wanted to waste the public money in building forts upon them." But Demosthenes, who evidently had the art of making himself popular, abroad or at home, persuaded the inferior officers and the men, who had nothing to do while detained in harbour, to begin the fortification by way of amusement. Very soon, in a rough way, by taking advantage of the natural ruggedness of the place, a fort was completed; and there Demosthenes, at his own request, was left with a guard of five ships, while the rest proceeded on their voyage. His little garrison was soon strengthened by the arrival of two Messenian galleys with a few regular troops.

The Lacedæmonians heard of the occupation, and were at first inclined to treat the affair with ridicule, as the Athenian admirals had done. But Agis, the

Spartan king, took a more serious view of the matter. He was away in Attica, in command of the confederate force, which was engaged, now for the fifth season, in burning and destroying the crops of the unhappy farmers of Attica. The invaders themselves were suffering there in some degree; the corn was not so forward as usual, for the spring had been cold, and they had hard work to maintain themselves. The king evacuated the country after the comparatively short stay of fifteen days, and hurried back to meet the new emergency. The fleet was recalled from Corcyra; and as soon as possible an attack was made in strong force by land and sea upon Demosthenes's new stronghold. He had received sufficient warning, however, to send off for help to the Athenian admirals, and meanwhile made the best dispositions he could.

Across and in front of the harbour, forming its natural protection, lay the little island of Sphakteria (Sphagia). This was at once occupied by the Spartans, while they prepared to close the two narrow entrances to the harbour on each side of the island by galleys strongly lashed together with their beaks outwards, so as to keep off the expected Athenian fleet, and block up the garrison of Pylos.* Then they made their attack from within. Demosthenes drew up his little force at the landing-place—narrow and

* The present geography of Navarino and Sphagia can hardly be reconciled with this description. "There is no alternative," says Grote, "except to suppose that a great alteration has taken place in the two passages which separate Sphagia from the mainland, during the interval of 2400 years."

difficult—and fought at their head. The enemy attacked in divisions, for only a few galleys could take the shore at the same time; but attempt after attempt was repulsed. In vain did the historian's favourite hero, Brasidas—foremost here as always—do all that a hero could.

"Most conspicuous of all was Brasidas. He was in command of a galley; and when he saw the other captains and their steersmen hesitating because the landing was difficult, and cautious of wrecking their vessels, even where it did seem possible to take the shore, he shouted aloud that 'it did not become them to be sparing of their timbers where the enemy had built a stone wall,' and bade them even stave their galleys in, if need were, and force a landing. And he bade the allies not grudge to sacrifice their ships for the Lacedæmonians, in this hour of need, in return for their many obligations; but to run them ashore, and land at all hazards, and make themselves masters of the place and the garrison. Thus did he upbraid the others; and so, having forced his own helmsman to run his galley ashore, stepped on the gangway, and, as he was in the act of landing, was cut down by the Athenians, and fell apparently lifeless, covered with wounds. His shield slipped from his arm and fell into the sea; and when it was afterwards cast ashore, the Athenians picked it up, and used it in forming the trophy which they set up after repulsing the attack. Eager as the rest were to land, they could not do it; so difficult was the place, and so

firmly did the Athenians stand their ground and never give back."—(IV. 11, 12.)

Thucydides remarks on the reversal of parts on this occasion,—the Athenians, whose pride was in their naval superiority, fighting so well on land, while the Lacedæmonians were now the attacking party by sea. These resolved, however, that their next attempt should be from the land side. But now the Athenian fleet returned to the rescue of the garrison, and all at once matters were entirely changed. They sailed into the harbour before the enemy had carried out their purpose of blockading the entrances, captured and destroyed some portion of their fleet, became themselves masters of the harbour, and so cut off the Lacedæmonian detachment who had been landed on the island from all intercourse with their friends on the mainland. The blockading party had in their turn become the blockaded.

The Lacedæmonians were in consternation. Their men on the island seemed to have only the choice between starvation and surrender. The Ephors—the high council of State, superior in some respects even to the kings—came in person to Pylos to advise. They obtained an armistice, and sent ambassadors to Athens to try to negotiate a peace. Before even the armistice was granted, they had to put their entire naval force of sixty galleys into the hands of the Athenians as a guarantee of good faith, that so they might be allowed to supply their men in Sphakteria with daily rations

so long as the armistice should last, until the return of their ambassadors from Athens.

There is a proud humility in the language in which Thucydides has embodied the overtures made by the envoys of Lacedæmon. They appeal to the common experience of all men as to the fickleness of fortune. "We, who stand first in reputation of all Greeks, are come here to you,—we who aforetime thought ourselves rather in a position to bestow what we now come to ask: simply because we have failed in calculations which would have been justified under ordinary circumstances." Let them beware, continued the speaker, of dreaming that fortune would always favour one side, or that war would always take the course which the belligerents expected or desired. Athens had now an excellent opportunity of showing moderation in her hour of triumph, and of leaving to posterity a lasting reputation for true wisdom as well as power. Bitter as their enmity had been, generosity might make them friends,—the driving men to extremities never would. The speaker adds a word, as well he might, on behalf of the unfortunate smaller states of each confederacy, "who were now fighting without clearly knowing which party was the aggressor." But he belies this unusual show of consideration for weaker powers by the selfish policy more than hinted at in his conclusion—that "if Athens and Lacedæmon were but agreed, they might be sure that the rest of Greece would know its own weakness too well not to show them the greatest deference."

The Athenian Assembly was too triumphant to be moderate. "They thought," says their historian, "that they could now have peace whenever they chose, and they were greedy after further advantage." Foremost of those who expressed this feeling loudly was Cleon, still as powerful as ever with the multitude. He persuaded them to insist on the restoration of the forts of the Megarians, Pegæ and Nisæa—dear to the hearts of the Athenian commons as Calais was to the English queen—with certain other acquisitions which they had been compelled to give up by the terms of that "Thirty Years' Peace" which had so lately been broken. The Lacedæmonians were not as yet sufficiently humbled to accept such conditions, and their envoys went back to Pylos.

The Athenians still retained possession of the enemy's fleet, regardless of all protest, on the real or pretended ground of some violation of the terms of armistice; and their own galleys cruised round Sphakteria day and night, giving no chance of relief or escape to the unfortunate prisoners there. But this constant blockade grew wearisome; the Athenians suffered from scarcity of water; in spite of all precautions, slaves were found who swam over from the mainland with scanty supplies of corn to the men on the island, or crossed from various points in small boats on stormy nights, tempted by large rewards; and Athens grew impatient. "Why was not a landing effected, and the men made prisoners at once?"

Then followed a curious episode in the war—a half-ludicrous triumph for the favourite of the Athenian

commons, and an endless subject of jest for the political satirists of the day. Cleon said, in one of his harangues, that "if their generals were but men, they would run their vessels in, and capture the people on the island; and if *he* were in command, he would do it."

"He aimed his words at Nicias, son of Niceratus, who was then general, and whom he hated," says the historian; for Nicias was the very opposite of Cleon, the representative of all that was moderate and respectable. Nicias at once bade him—so far as he was concerned—take what force he chose with him, and attempt it. How far either was in earnest at the outset seems doubtful. Cleon would have drawn back from his first challenge; but the more he seemed to try to escape from the position, the more strongly did both his supporters and his enemies insist on his carrying it out. Then he changed his mood: give him merely a body of auxiliaries—he would not ask to risk an Athenian's life in the service—and within twenty days he would bring these Spartans prisoners to Athens, or die in the attempt. "There was a good deal of merriment among the Athenians," says Thucydides, "at his boastful talk; all the moderate party, however, were delighted, calculating that one of two good things must be the result—they would either get rid of Cleon (which was what they rather hoped and expected), or, if they were disappointed in that opinion, they would get the Lacedæmonians into their hands." It is not difficult to understand that such a challenge from Cleon would be received by the Athenian mob

with a keen appreciation of the joke against the "moderates," and a half-humorous and half-serious encouragement to carry it out. But it is seldom that a practical jest is carried out on so grand a scale, or at such risk of national honour.

Cleon set out for Pylos; and, probably to the surprise of friends and foes alike, made good his words. He had asked to have Demosthenes associated with him in the command, because he was aware, the historian thinks, that he was already meditating a descent upon the island. A strong force of heavy-armed infantry were landed before daybreak in two divisions, at two separate points, who cut to pieces the enemy's outpost; and at dawn the light troops followed them, took advantage of all rising ground, and thence showered arrows and javelins on the enemy. The whole force thrown upon the island must have been near 10,000 men. For a while the Lacedæmonians maintained themselves in an old rude fortification at one end of the island, though their men were falling fast, and they were all weak from long privation; but at last they were taken in rear, their commander was killed, and his lieutenant mortally wounded; and the survivors lowered their shields and bowed their heads towards their assailants in token of submission. Within the twenty days, Cleon brought home his prisoners to Athens—two hundred and ninety-two men, of whom one hundred and twenty were citizens of Sparta. Nearly one-third of the detachment had fallen in their obstinate defence.

It is perhaps the most remarkable episode in the

whole war; and one does not feel sure that the story, well told as it is, is told quite fairly for Cleon. All that Thucydides says of his success is, "So Cleon's promise, insane as it was, was fulfilled." He would make it appear that Cleon was a mere braggart—that he was driven to carry out his boast quite against his will—and that he was favoured unexpectedly by circumstances; and that the credit of the capture was due, after all, to Demosthenes and not to him. It is quite impossible to discuss, in these brief pages, a question which has interested and divided great historical authorities, and as to which we have very few facts, and very strong assertions; but Mr Grote's defence of Cleon is at least well worth reading. He is clearly right on one point: if Cleon was a mere idle boaster, and not a competent soldier, it was a gross breach of trust in Nicias to resign his command to him so readily. That Cleon was violent and boastful may be readily believed, without impugning his military capacity; and at Athens every political leader was almost of necessity a soldier also, and must be ready to take responsibility upon himself in the field as well as in the council. There is undoubtedly an exceptional bitterness, whether it be of prejudice or of honest contempt, in Thucydides's language about Cleon; and this has led to the belief that Cleon was his personal enemy, and the chief agent in his banishment from Athens. Yet we have to remember, when we begin to suspect the historian of having for a moment forgotten his usual impartiality, that his narrative of the affair of Sphakteria was drawn up

in the first instance for a public who were cotemporary with the event itself; and that the satirists of the day—who are valuable witnesses if not always to facts, yet to the popular judgment of facts—more than endorse the historian's estimate of Cleon's exploit.

This passage in Greek history has a very curious parallel in our own. Our West India merchant-ships had long been harassed by the Spaniards, who made Porto Bello in New Granada their chief station. Admiral Hosier was sent with a fleet to cruise off that coast for the protection of British trade, but with orders not to attack the place. During a long inaction he lost his best officers and half his crews by disease, while he felt himself a laughing-stock to the Spaniards; and the chagrin and mortification are said to have finally broken his heart. Meanwhile, in 1739, Admiral Vernon, an Opposition member of the House of Commons—who seems to have been not unlike Cleon in character, "fierce and not ineloquent in debate, the delight of his own party," and with a considerable share of "blunt impudence"—said that Porto Bello might easily be taken: nay, that *he* would undertake to do so with six ships, if *he* were given the command. Sir Robert Walpole, who was then Minister, "hoping to appease the popular clamour, and to get rid for a time of Vernon's busy opposition," closed with the offer. Vernon went out, took the place, razed its fortifications, and returned to receive a popular ovation and the formal thanks of both Houses. The parallel holds good even further: Vernon failed afterwards, when put in com-

mand on the West India station, as Cleon did in Thrace.*

The surrender of a Lacedæmonian force, consisting in large proportion of citizens of Sparta, caused a profound sensation throughout the Greek communities. "Their opinion of the Lacedæmonians had always been that neither for famine nor for any other strait would they stoop to lay down their arms, but that they would die with their weapons in their hands, fighting to the last." Some professed not to believe, he goes on to say, that the men who surrendered were of true Spartan blood, like those who fell. "One inquirer asked, by way of insult, whether those who had been killed were all real Spartan gentlemen?" and was answered by one of the prisoners "that it would be a valuable arrow indeed which knew how to pick out the best men."

The occupation of Pylos was made permanent, by planting there a garrison of Messenians from Naupactus, who were admirably fitted, from their knowledge of the Lacedæmonian language and habits, to annoy and harass the surrounding district; the place would serve, too, as an asylum to such of the Lacedæmonian slaves (the Helots, consisting mainly of the descendants of the conquered Messenians) as might take the opportunity to desert. Nicias succeeded also in occupying another very important station on their enemy's

* This remarkable parallel was first noticed by a writer in the 'Philological Museum,' vol. ii. p. 704. The story is perhaps best known by Glover's (or Lord Bath's) ballad, "Hosier's Ghost," which seems to have been really written as a political squib.

coast—the island of Cythera (Cerigo)—and made this the base of his operations against the maritime towns. He retorted upon the Lacedæmonians their own strategics by a seven days' raid upon crops and cattle; while they on their part were forced to omit their usual invasion in the early summer of the year that followed the disaster at Sphakteria, because the Athenians had given warning that they would put the prisoners who had been taken there to death, if the enemy marched over their border. It was probably at this time that the Lacedæmonians carried out perhaps the most cruel and treacherous act of policy which history records. Many of these Helots had done them faithful service in the war; but now, with these new places of refuge open for them at Pylos and Cythera, they were under strong temptation to throw off their yoke. Let Thucydides tell the story, though he does it in the coldest words, and with no note of reprobation:—

"They made proclamation that they would select [from the Helots] those who could show that they had done them the best service in war, in order to give them their freedom; applying a sort of test, as thinking that those who had the spirit to come forward first to claim their freedom were the very men who were most likely to rise upon their masters. So they picked out two thousand, who crowned themselves with garlands and made the round of all the temples as freedmen: and soon afterwards they got rid of them all, and yet no man knew in what fashion they were severally made away with."—(IV. 80.)

So utterly disheartened were the Lacedæmonian leaders, that they sent again to negotiate a peace, but again in vain. Athens was determined to push her good fortune to the uttermost, and to dictate her own terms; and she thus lost an opportunity of terminating the war with honour and advantage which never occurred to her under such favourable circumstances again.

CHAPTER X.

THUCYDIDES AT AMPHIPOLIS.

In the eighth year of the war, there came an appeal to the Lacedæmonians from Thrace. The subject-allies of Athens in that quarter were always restless, and only wanted some external support to break out into open revolt against her rule. Perdiccas of Macedonia, too, having a quarrel of his own on hand with a neighbouring prince, offered to join the Chalcidians of Thrace in paying and maintaining a body of troops from Lacedæmon, if they could be sent; and they specially asked that Brasidas, as knowing the country and being highly popular, should be sent out in command. He had by this time recovered from his wounds at Pylos, and was ready enough to go. But the enterprise was not much favoured by his government. He seems to have undertaken it very much on his own responsibility. All that he could obtain was the arming of 700 of the Helots—whom, under present circumstances, the authorities at Sparta were glad enough to spare—and leave to raise volunteers in the country. With these—some 1700 men in all—he set out by forced marches through Thessaly,

favoured by some of the chiefs, and escaping all opposition (though most of the tribes were friendly to the Athenians), alike by the rapidity of his movements and the tact with which he persuaded them of the harmless character of his expedition. So he safely reached Dium, under Mount Olympus, and there effected a junction with Perdiccas, against whom the Athenians, hearing of this movement, had already declared war. But the objects of Perdiccas and of Brasidas were different, and their co-operation did not last long.

His first operation was against the colony of Acanthus, where a party was ready to receive him. Our author says that "for a Lacedæmonian, Brasidas was not a bad speaker." He made a speech on this occasion which at least showed tact and good sense. He began with the popular assertion that he was come "to liberate Greece." He expressed his surprise that they were not unanimous in welcoming him: he had come a long way, and at much risk, for their sakes; he was not there as a partisan of the oligarchical party; all should be guaranteed their rights and liberties, if they accepted the alliance of Sparta. But he could not allow so important a city to damage the great cause of independence by its cowardice in not accepting such an offer, or permit Acanthus to continue to contribute revenue to the enemy: if they declined his overtures, he must, very reluctantly, use force.

Either his first or his last arguments had the desired effect. Acanthus changed its allegiance, and Brasidas occupied the town. Some of its weaker neighbours

followed its example, and others were reduced by force.

But the great stronghold of Athenian power and influence in those quarters was Amphipolis — "the-city-looking-both-ways" — which, with its adjacent port at Eion, commanded the passage of the river Strymon, and was the key to the commerce of the interior, and the depot for ship-timber from the neighbouring forests of Thrace. Thucydides tells us that the town of his own day was the second attempt which the Athenians had made to form a settlement there; and the importance attached to the position may be gathered from the fact that a body of no less than 10,000 colonists had gone out from Athens to occupy it in the first instance, all of whom were cut off by the native tribes.

Amphipolis was destined to be a fateful name to three of the best-known actors in this war. It was the scene of our historian's first campaign, so far as we know, and certainly of his last. He gives a very brief, and scarcely a satisfactory, account of it. His personal history and military reputation depend so much upon it, that it is fair, in the first place, to give his own few words. Brasidas had hoped to take the place by surprise, with the aid of a party inside the walls who were prepared to betray it to him.

"Meanwhile, the party opposed to these traitors in conjunction with Eucles, the commander who had come to them from Athens to defend the place, sent off to the other officer who was in command in

Thrace and its neighbourhood,—Thucydides, son of Olorus, who wrote this history, and who was then at Thasos, an island about half a day's sail from Amphipolis,—urging him to come to their relief. As soon as he heard it, he set sail at once with seven ships which happened to be there, hoping to reach Amphipolis before any capitulation took place, or in any case to save Eion. Brasidas meanwhile, fearing the arrival of this naval reinforcement from Thasos, and hearing that Thucydides had a property in the working of the gold-mines in that part of Thrace, and from that circumstance possessed great influence amongst the inhabitants, made every effort to be beforehand with him, if possible, in making himself master of the town; lest, if Thucydides arrived, the commons of Amphipolis, expecting that he would raise succours for them both by sea and from Thrace, and so secure them, would not surrender."—(IV. 104.)

Brasidas offered freedom and an independent government to all who chose to remain at Amphipolis, and liberty to withdraw, with all their property, to those who preferred to do so; and his terms were at once accepted. The author proceeds:—

"So on these terms they surrendered the city; and late that evening Thucydides and his galleys reached Eion. Brasidas had just taken possession of Amphipolis, and was within one night of taking Eion; for had not the fleet come promptly to its relief, he must have had it in the morning. Subsequently, Thucy-

dides so ordered matters as to secure Eion, not only for the present, in case Brasidas should attack it, but for the future as well; receiving there all who chose to come in from the town above, in accordance with the terms. Brasidas made a sudden descent by the river with a considerable number of boats, on the chance of seizing the point of land which reached out from the fortifications, and of so commanding the entrance, and made an attack at the same time by land, but was repulsed in both."—(IV. 107.)

It was for his conduct on this occasion that the writer was either banished from Athens, or expatriated himself to avoid a public sentence. He has mentioned this fact in as cold and brief terms as those in which he describes the events which led to it. He only alludes to it incidentally, when speaking of the opportunities he had of watching and recording the issue of the struggle at his leisure. "It was my fate to be an exile from my country for twenty years, after the operations at Amphipolis."* There is no word here of complaint or of self-excuse; and this reticence has been noted as a silent admission of culpability. It might be observed, on the other hand, that there was no necessity for his thus placing on record, in a work which he hoped would be to his countrymen "a heritage for ever," the cause of his exile, if he felt it to have been discreditable to himself. The question of the degree of blame to be attached to Thucydides for the loss of Amphipolis has been keenly discussed; and it has

* V. 26.

been assumed that he was in fact occupied in looking after his own mining interests in Thasos, and that this was why the ships "happened to be there," when they ought to have been at Eion. But the difficulty of forming a just estimate of military operations even when all the facts are recently before us, and the mistakes continually made by civilian criticism, are so notorious, that few sensible readers will be disposed to sit in judgment upon a campaign which took place more than two thousand years ago, and as to the details of which we have really no information. It is asserted by one of the biographers of the historian that Cleon was instrumental in his banishment, and that personal feeling on that account explains much of the exceptional severity with which Cleon's character is handled in this history of the war. It is at least very probable that Cleon, wielding as he did a strong popular influence, did bring it to bear against an unsuccessful commander whose political views were the opposite to his own. But nearly all that is certain in the matter is this—that had Thucydides been more successful as a soldier, we might have seen nothing of this history.

Thucydides disappears altogether from the scene, after playing this brief and unsuccessful part. He had to leave others to work out the fortunes of Athens, while they were to owe to his pen much of the interest which they retain to this day for the modern student and reader.

He candidly and simply admits that the news of the loss of Amphipolis was received at Athens with "great

dismay." They saw in it the prelude to a general defection of their allies on the Thracian border. In a great measure it was so. Everywhere Brasidas announced himself as the liberator of those to whom he appealed. Uniting in his own character all the best qualities of an officer, gentleness and moderation combined with the most daring personal courage, he inspired confidence in all with whom he had to do; and town after town either listened to his proposals, or even sent secret messages to invite him to organise and support a revolution. News had reached Thrace, too, of the disastrous defeat of the Athenians by the combined forces of Bœotia at the battle of Delium*—of which the historian gives a full account, but on which we must not linger—and they came to the rash conclusion that this was the beginning of the end. "The extent of their miscalculation of the power of Athens only became evident to them by her subsequent achievements," says Thucydides, in one of his most obscure sentences; "they judged rather from their own groundless wishes, than from any safe calculation. For when men earnestly desire a thing, they are wont to indulge their hope of it without much consideration, and to put aside what is disagreeable by a process of reasoning which admits no argument on the other side." As fast as they could, the Athenians threw garrisons into the towns which still retained their allegiance; while Brasidas on his part sent home for reinforcements. He saw all the advantages of Amphipolis as a naval station, and would at once have begun to build a fleet of war-galleys in the river, but was foiled

* IV. 90, &c.

in his scheme for a great foreign campaign by the jealousy—so Thucydides very briefly tells us—of "some of the great men at home." With the spring came an armistice for a year, mainly on the principle of the *uti possidetis;* both parties being now desirous of peace, the one to check the rapid course of Brasidas's conquests, the other to recover their valuable prisoners taken on Sphakteria, connected as they doubtless were with the leading families in Sparta.

The armistice was not altogether strictly kept on either side, and the war, though suspended in other quarters, went on in Thrace. Reinforcements were sent thither by both the contending powers. And Nicias, who will be remembered as the antagonist of Cleon in Athenian politics, makes his first prominent appearance in a military capacity, as one of the commanders of a strong Athenian force which was landed on the coast to relieve or recover some of the towns which had been attacked by Brasidas. When the year of truce had expired without any step having been taken on either side towards a lasting peace, the war was resumed; though at first, as it would appear, somewhat reluctantly and slackly on both sides. The public feeling both at Athens and Lacedæmon was in favour of negotiation; but, if we may trust Thucydides, there was one man in each state whom the circumstances of the time had raised to a commanding position—though the circumstances were very different in the two cases—and to whom peace was unpalatable. "Cleon and Brasidas," says the historian, "were both strongly opposed to peace: the latter because he owed all his success and

his honours to war; the former because, when times were quiet, he thought he should be more readily detected in his malpractices, and find his calumnies not so greedily believed." * There seems an unfairness here not only to Cleon, whom Thucydides may have been inclined always to judge hardly, but to Brasidas as well, to whom he is so evidently disposed to do full justice. It is surely quite possible, and quite in accordance with all we know of Brasidas, that besides the personal ambition and love of distinction which mark every able soldier, he may also have had larger and more patriotic aspirations; he may have longed to carry the war to a triumphant conclusion, to destroy the Athenian supremacy in Thrace, now that he had made so promising a breach in it, and to make his own city, and not Athens, once more the centre of the power and influence of the Hellenic name. It is not easy, again, to see why war should in itself have such attractions for a man like Cleon. If he lacked, as Thucydides would have us think, and as even his advocate Mr Grote thinks, the abilities of a commander, he was risking his own reputation daily in a state where not to be a soldier was to be nothing: and it is needless to say that a desire for national glory, and even a sensitiveness to national honour, are not unfrequently found in the most violent of popular demagogues.

Be this as it may, if Brasidas and Cleon were really the foremost advocates of the renewed war, they were also amongst its very first victims. Whether by his

* V. 16.

own wish or not,—whether the office was thrust upon him, as in some sense it was in the matter of Sphakteria, or whether he sought it for himself, as Thucydides asserts,—Cleon went out, soon after the termination of the armistice, with an imposing force to grapple with Brasidas in Thrace. He began successfully. He took the town of Torone, which Brasidas had wrested from Athenian rule—that general, like Thucydides at Amphipolis, was now too late to save it—sent the Peloponnesian garrison and its citizens, 700 in all, prisoners to Athens, and sold its women and children for slaves. The capture of another town followed: and then Cleon took up his quarters at Eion, watching his opportunity for Amphipolis, and waiting for reinforcements which he hoped to get from Perdiccas, who had once more transferred his fickle friendship to the Athenians. Brasidas meanwhile had been strengthening his army with Thracian mercenaries, and now threw himself into Amphipolis.

Cleon, says the historian, waited till his army grew impatient, and almost forced him to move upon the town: so long as that was in the hands of the enemy, the honour of Athens was unavenged, and her Thracian interests in danger. He advanced near enough to reconnoitre the town and its position, and to regret that he had not brought engines with him to take it. He had made up his mind to retire his forces for the time, to wait for his expected reinforcements, and then to surround the place on all sides, and sweep down all resistance by force of numbers: in fact, says Thucydides, to repeat the tactics of Sphakteria;

though it is not easy to see exactly the force of the comparison.

Brasidas determined on a sudden dash, at the head of a picked detachment, right upon the centre of the enemy's line, as they were on the point of retiring, not dreaming of any sally from the town. Before he delivered his attack, he made his last speech to his lieutenant, Clearidas, and the whole body of troops, Spartans and allies, drawn up within the walls. His oration was soldier-like, and to the point. He told them his plan: after he had made his dash, Clearidas was to throw open the gates on the other side, and charge with the main body. He and his Spartans were to behave—as Spartans always did; and the allies were to choose between proving themselves worthy to fight by the side of freemen, or remaining the "slaves of Athens."

From the higher ground where Cleon was now halting, the interior of the town was plainly visible. The movements now going on within attracted his attention: scouts who had ventured close up to the walls—for no defenders showed themselves—could see under the gates the close-packed feet of men and horses as if prepared for a sally in force. Cleon had no mind for a general engagement until reinforced, and gave orders to withdraw to the old position at Eion. The change of movement was made in haste; and at that critical moment Brasidas and his party made their sally, taking their enemy's line in flank as they moved off. Clearidas followed up the attack. The Athenian left wing, which was leading towards Eion, broke at once and

fled. The right re-formed on the hill, and made a stout resistance for some time; but the light-armed Thracians showered missiles upon them from all sides, and at last they too broke their ranks, and the survivors made their way by various mountain-paths back to their quarters at Eion. Cleon was with the right wing, but took to flight at once, and met with an ignominious death at the hands of a native targeteer.

The Athenians had lost six hundred of their best men; the victors only seven. But their victory that day was turned into mourning. Among the seven, carried off the field early in the action, mortally wounded, was Brasidas. "They bore him, still alive, into the city: he lived to hear that his side was victorious, but soon after became unconscious, and expired." He was buried with unusual honours—"at the public expense, within the city, in front of the present market-place; and from that day forth the men of Amphipolis, having fenced his tomb, sacrifice to him as a hero, and honour him with games and offerings every year." They even adopted him for their founder, instead of the Athenian Hagnon, who had been the original leader of the colony: Hagnon had but built them walls; Brasidas had laid the foundations of their liberty. Unanimous consent of friends and foes alike has pronounced Brasidas the hero of the war: he is almost the only Spartan since the days of Leonidas round whom anything like a halo of romance has gathered; and there was probably something of the old heroic type in his person and bearing as well

as in his character, since Plato, in his 'Symposium,' has compared him with the "perfect knight" of classical legend—the faultless Achilles.

Thucydides considers that the deaths of Cleon and Brasidas removed the great obstacle to the peace which had been so long talked of. The majority on both sides were anxious for it, each having their special reasons for uneasiness, and both being tired of the long war. The Lacedæmonians knew that their Helot population was restless: their long truce with Argos (which had been neuter in this war) was on the point of expiring, and they had a not unfounded suspicion that Argos might seek to form a new confederacy, of which she herself should be the head. Repeated conferences were held during the winter. At a convention of the confederate Peloponnesians, the votes of the large majority were for immediate negotiations—Corinth and Megara being among the few dissentients, the former still implacably jealous, and the latter dreading the final result when Athens should find leisure and opportunity to deal with her alone. At the beginning of the following spring, just ten years after the first invasion of Attica, the treaty known as the Peace of Nicias was concluded, for fifty years. Conquests and prisoners on both sides were to be given up, except such places as had accepted terms of capitulation; so that the Thebans would still hold Platæa, while Athens retained possession of Nisæa, the port of the Megarians. But its stipulations were never carried into effect. The Thracians refused to give up Amphipolis, though

the Lacedæmonians did all they could to secure its restoration to Athens, withdrawing their own garrison at once. The other more powerful allies of Lacedæmon repudiated the terms altogether, and the general treaty was superseded by a defensive alliance, for the same term of fifty years, between Athens and Sparta only.

CHAPTER XI.

ARGOS.

THE Peace of Nicias, as it was called, concluded prospectively for fifty years, lasted somewhat less than seven. Even during that period, the state of things was not really peace at all, as Thucydides remarks, but merely a suspension of active hostilities between Athens and Sparta, and that disturbed by mutual suspicions and discontent. Athens had restored the prisoners of Sphakteria—the hostages who had been so valuable to her as a material guarantee; but she had not got back—for Sparta had declared herself not in a position to give back—her own town of Amphipolis; and her dissatisfaction was intense. As to the rest of the Peloponnesian confederacy, so many states had refused to accept the original treaty, and their confidence in Sparta as a head had been so materially shaken, that they began to turn their eyes towards Argos as a possible new leader for Greece. With her resources fresh and unexhausted, having been resting while others were fighting, and with all the prestige of a traditional supremacy as old as the siege of Troy, she formed a natural rallying-point for the smaller states.

Corinth, the leader of the malcontents, had sent her envôys to Argos straight from the last congress of the confederates; and, after some secret negotiations, a new league was formed, of which Argos was to be the head, and Corinth, Elis, and others of less importance, were to be members. The Spartans became alarmed, and a party there endeavoured to make a separate alliance for their own state with Argos; but, owing to a misunderstanding, the project failed. In fact, Argos for the time seemed mistress of the situation, for all Greece was suing for her favours. Advances were made to her from Athens, where a young man had just come forward into public life who was to play a brilliant but mischievous part among his fellow-citizens. Alcibiades is introduced to us by the historian with the same abruptness as Pericles; he considers him, no doubt (as he must here be considered), already well known to his readers by name and repute. Connected with Pericles by the mother's side through the same great house of Alcmæon, he was a very different man from his great relative. Strikingly handsome and accomplished like him, clever and ambitious, he was utterly devoid of moral principle and of anything like earnest patriotism. He now warmly advocated a renunciation of the treaty with Sparta, and an immediate alliance with Argos. Partly, Thucydides thinks, because he really thought such a course was best for the interests of Athens; "but," continues the historian, "also because he was opposed to the late treaty from a feeling of jealousy, because the Lacedæmonians had negotiated it through the agency

of Nicias and Laches, while they passed him over on account of his youth, and did not treat him with the respect due to the old public connection of his family with their city—a connection which, though his grandfather had renounced it, he had himself thought to renew by his attention to their prisoners from the island." Alcibiades asserted that the real object which Sparta had in view, in proposing the existing treaty, was to prevent Athens from obtaining Argos as an ally. He induced this latter state to send proposals to Athens, which he supported by the most unscrupulous stratagem. Sparta, thoroughly alarmed, had sent her own envoys to Athens at the same time to remonstrate against this new confederacy. In a private interview, Alcibiades represented himself as the supporter of Spartan interests, won their confidence, and suggested to them a line of dissimulation which he was immediately the first to denounce in the public assembly. In spite of the strong opposition of Nicias and others, a treaty between Athens and Argos, in which Elis was also included—"for a hundred years" —was finally arranged; though it was not construed as necessarily putting an end to the existing peaceful relations with Sparta.

Some minor hostilities, during which a fruitless effort was made by Athens to open negotiations for a general peace, were followed by an invasion of the territory of Argos by the Lacedæmonians in full force, supported by large contingents of their Corinthian and other allies. They succeeded in throwing themselves between the Argive army and the city of Argos, and,

in fact, nearly surrounding them in their position. The Argives, however, obtained an armistice from Agis, the Spartan king, who was commander-in-chief, and he withdrew from his position of advantage. "The Lacedæmonians followed him," says our author, "because he was in command, in obedience to law, but they blamed him loudly amongst each other: for this was the finest army of Greeks which up to that time had ever been assembled; and it presented that appearance thoroughly while it was in full strength at Nemea—all picked men of their respective nationalities, and a match apparently not only for the Argive league, but for another added to that."* But, as a remarkable instance how little military tactics and positions are understood, in all times, except by the few experts, the mass of the Argives, Thucydides tells us, were equally angry with their generals for allowing (as they supposed) the enemy to escape. There can be little doubt that the historian was in the immediate neighbourhood of Mantineia at the time of the battle, and had seen the array of the confederated forces with his own eyes.

The armistice was tacitly annulled by both combatants; and the Argives, now strongly reinforced by a division of Athenians (which was accompanied by Alcibiades himself in some civil capacity), marched into the central plain of the Peloponnese, known as a district by the name of Arcadia, but where the two powerful towns of Mantineia and Tegea were now at feud—the latter adhering to Lacedæmon, while Man-

* V. 60.

tineia had joined the new Argive league. The Lacedæmonians hurried with all the troops they could muster, Helots included, and "by a more rapid march than they had ever been known to make before," to defend their Arcadian ally; and before Mantineia the armies of the two confederacies met at last in a bloody and decisive battle. Each commander of the allies on both sides harangued his own troops before the engagement, excepting only the Spartan king. His men, singing their national war-songs, "exhorted each other to remember all their cunning, as brave men should, knowing that long training in action is a better security than an extempore exhortation, however well expressed in words." The historian tells us how "the Argives and their allies moved forward rapidly and with excitement, while the Lacedæmonians marched slowly, to the music of a number of pipers, as is their established custom, not from any religious feeling, but that they may advance in even line and keeping step, and that their ranks may not be broken—as is very much wont to be the case with large armies when they advance." * The writer gives us here also a short professional criticism on the military tactics of the day. All armies, he says, thrust out the line too much by their right when they close; because every man tries to protect his right (where he has no shield) by the shield of his right-hand man. The Lacedæmonians gained a complete victory, and piled arms and erected a trophy on the field of battle. The enemy lost in all 1100 men, including both the Athenian commanders:

* V. 70.

the loss of the Lacedæmonians was supposed to have been not more than 300.

This victory restored at once the honour and prestige of the Lacedæmonian name. Men now began to argue, says the historian, "that they had been worsted by accident, but in spirit they had been always the same." To Argos the immediate result was curious, and probably unexpected. In that state there was a party which had always been in favour of alliance with Lacedæmon. The picked body of 1000 heavy-armed infantry, a kind of *garde noble* composed exclusively of young men of the higher classes, had been victorious in their own quarter of the battle, had broken the left wing of the enemy, and maintained the honour of their native city. They seem now to have had influence enough with their fellow-citizens to effect a bloodless revolution, to put down the democracy, to break with democratic Athens, and to join their late conquerors, the more aristocratic and conservative Lacedæmonians, with whom an alliance was concluded for the favourite term of fifty years. It lasted some few months. Then the commons of Argos rose against the oligarchy, regained their power, and put their city again in alliance with Athens. They even began to build long walls down from the city to the harbour, so as to be able in future to communicate easily with their powerful friends by sea; but these works the Lacedæmonians succeeded in destroying.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FATE OF MELOS.

THE Ægean Sea (or, as we now call it, the Archipelago) has been fairly described as being at this period "an Athenian lake." But the island of Melos formed a striking exception. It was a Lacedæmonian —*i.e.*, a Dorian—colony, alien in race and habits from its neighbours of Ionian descent, and had at first been neutral in this contest. The Athenians had sent a small squadron there in the sixth year of the war, and tried to enforce submission by ravaging their lands, but without making any impression on their stubborn independence. They now sent a stronger force, but with orders to treat with the inhabitants before committing any act of hostility. This led to a curious conference, which the author professes to report in full, between the Melian authorities and the Athenian envoys, who were not admitted to an audience in the popular assembly of the island. The dialogue, too long for reproduction here, is almost dramatic. The Athenians request that they may be allowed to state their propositions and arguments *seriatim*, and to meet any objections in detail. After some preliminary

fencing, the Athenian spokesman is made to use the following language, to which no objection could possibly be made on the ground of ambiguity or lack of plain dealing:—

"Well, we have no intention on our part to set forth a long story (to which you would give no credit), with plausible assertions of our right to assume this supremacy after we had broken the power of the Mede, or of our coming against you now because we are the injured party; nor do we want to hear from you that, though colonists from Lacedæmon, you have not joined her in this war, or that you have done us no harm—that would not affect our determination. But we advise you to act in accordance with the real sentiments of both parties, and to make the best terms you can under the circumstances; for you know, and we know, that, in men's dealings with each other, abstract right is considered only when both stand on equal terms: in other cases, the stronger party exact all they can, and the weaker have to give way."—(V. 89.)

The Melians submit that, even as a question of expediency, it is not well for the stronger to be too overbearing: the Athenians would be setting a precedent which might some day be turned against themselves, in case of a reverse of fortune. The Athenians, in reply, beg the islanders not to trouble themselves on that point—the future of Athens they are content to risk for themselves. For the present, the submission of the Melians is for the advantage of both parties: it will save them-

selves much suffering, and Athens will thereby gain a subject instead of having to destroy an enemy. The Melians ask why they may not be allowed to remain in a state of friendly neutrality? No,—to recognise such a position would be a confession of weakness on the part of the Athenians: it would imply an inability to reduce them by force. The Melians argue that if Athens will risk so much for empire, they themselves are surely justified in risking something for independence: they are answered,—it is a question for them not of honour, but of life or death. They remind the Athenians that, after all, the fortune of war is always uncertain: the reply is, that nothing is so ruinous to men and states as hope, when hope means only dependence on the chapter of accidents; let them "not show the folly of those who, when they might save themselves by human prudence, take refuge in visionary dreams, like soothsaying and oracles, which only ruin those who trust them." The Melians contend that they have reasonable ground of hope, in their own case; the gods will aid the right, and the Lacedæmonians will not fail to succour them—from a sense of honour, if for no other reason. The Athenian answers something in the Napoleonic spirit, that the gods are on the whole "in favour of strong battalions:" being much given to maintain their own dominion by the strong hand. As to the notion that the Lacedæmonians will help them out of a sense of honour,—"we bless your innocent hearts," says the speaker, "but we don't envy your common-sense;" the Lacedæmonians have too shrewd

a regard for their own interests to encounter Athens by sea in defence of a colony. The colonists—whose argument grows sensibly weaker and less confident—reply that the Lacedæmonians could avenge themselves on Athens by land. The Athenians close the discussion by strongly advising the Melians to reconsider seriously their intention of resistance. The latter continued resolute, however, in their refusal of submission, though they still offered to remain neutral: and the Athenian envoys retired to their own lines, after an ominous warning that "men who staked their confidence on such things as Lacedæmonians, and fortune, and hope," and suchlike broken reeds, were like to find themselves bitterly disappointed. So it proved in the result. Works of circumvallation were immediately begun, and the place was closely invested by land and sea; the Lacedæmonians never stirred to save them; and although the Melians twice broke through the besiegers' lines and carried in provisions, they were reduced in the course of the following winter to surrender at discretion. The Athenians slaughtered all the men in cold blood, and made slaves of the women and children: and their historian relates the fact without a word of reprobation. There does not appear to have been, in this case, even a reference to the decision of the Assembly at Athens. Atrocious as such an act would appear to us, in the case of prisoners of war who had surrendered at discretion, it was not repugnant to the savage war-code of the day. The islanders had their fate, in case of resistance, set before them in very plain words by the

Athenian speaker; they knew what had been done by the Lacedæmonians at Platæa, and by the Athenians at Mitylenè; and though they remonstrate strongly against the whole proceeding as an unwarrantable aggression, they enter no special protest against the cruelty of the alternative, and make their election with all the consequences before their eyes.*

The insolent frankness with which the Athenian in the dialogue is made to put forward the principle that "might makes right" has led a very early critic to suspect that Thucydides, writing in the bitterness of exile, chose to set forth the policy of Athens in the most invidious colours.† Such a charge is highly improbable: there was nothing to have prevented the historian from doing the same in other passages of his work which internal evidence shows to have been written under the same circumstances. But though the principle is here asserted in language almost brutal in its directness, it is the principle which, veiled in a sophistry more or less transparent, appears in some shape on every occasion when the Athenians come forward

* Bp. Thirlwall's remark upon the massacre at Melos is sufficiently caustic: "The milder spirit of modern manners would not have punished men, who had been guilty of no offence but the assertion of their rightful independence, more severely than by tearing them from their families, and locking them up in a fortress, or transporting them to the wilds of Scythia. But our exultation at the progress of humanity may be consistent with a charitable indulgence for the imperfections of a lower stage of civilisation."

† Dionysius, Judicium de Thucyd., pp. 37-42.

either as complainants or apologists. They had gained their empire fairly,—they meant to keep it: it was a despotism, which admitted no resistance; and the laws of justice and humanity had force only amongst equals under equal circumstances: they had no place in the relations of weak states to the stronger.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EXPEDITION TO SICILY.

With his sixth book, Thucydides begins what might be called the history of the decline and fall of Athens. In this and the following book the interest of his story culminates; and at the conclusion of the seventh he brings us, with a rapidity of narration which is perhaps intentional, to the collapse (for it is little less) of that remarkable empire whose growth and strength he has been tracing. The tale of the Athenian expedition against Syracuse becomes in his hands one of the most perfect dramas in history, and is told, from introduction to catastrophe, with the most consummate skill.

We must go back some ten years, in order to trace the first interference of Athens in the affairs of Sicily, which was to exercise so fatal an influence upon her fortunes in the sequel. That island was largely occupied, especially on the southern and eastern coasts, by prosperous colonies from Greece; and of these, some were of Dorian and others of Ionian race. The same division of sympathies existed, therefore, among the Greeks in Sicily as in the mother country. At the beginning of the war, Sparta had sent a requisition to

the Dorian sea-coast towns, the chief of which were Syracuse and Agrigentum, to furnish a contingent of war-galleys: but they seem to have contented themselves with taking the opportunity of attacking their Ionian neighbours on the island. One of these, Leontini, in the fifth year of the war, had appealed for aid to Athens against the aggressions of Syracuse. A small squadron was sent with the further important object of stopping the exportation of corn from Sicily into the Peloponnese, and of ascertaining what chance there might be of reducing the whole island. There was not much result either from this or from a subsequent expedition, beyond a temporary occupation of Messènè, at that time a town of not much importance. Athenian and Syracusan squadrons had occasional indecisive engagements in Sicilian waters; but the more important expedition sent out under Eurymedon had been diverted, as may be remembered, by the descent upon Pylos, and arrived on the coast of Sicily too late in the season for any large operations.*

In the eighth year of the war, the internal feuds of the island being for the time in abeyance, a congress of representatives from most of the Sicilian towns was held, with a view to a general pacification. The leading spirit in the congress was Hermocrates of Syracuse, a man of eminent abilities and high personal character, representing, however, only one political interest in his native city—the oligarchical. In the speech with which the historian has furnished him (we can hardly suppose that, in the case of a Sicilian speaker, any-

* See p. 110.

thing beyond the merest outline of his argument can have been preserved), he urges strongly upon all his countrymen—Dorians, Ionians, or others—the paramount necessity of union among themselves in the presence of a foreign enemy, always on the watch to take advantage of their internal quarrels.* He warns them that the ultimate aim of Athens is not the support of Ionian colonists, but nothing less than the subjugation of the island. He bids them all remember that, whether Dorians or Ionians, they were Sicilians first. "I make considerable allowance," he says, "for the Athenians, in these ambitious designs and schemes of conquest: it is not those who aspire to empire that I blame, but those who are only too ready to make submission. It is the nature of men, everywhere and always, to lord it over those who yield, but to have a care of those who hold their own." The advice was taken—for the time; and the Athenian commanders, having assented to the general treaty of pacification, left the coasts of Sicily. But the Athenian Assembly, indignant at the disappointment of their projects, and believing, or pretending to believe, that their officers had been bribed, punished them by exile on their return. An attempt was subsequently made on the part of Athens to support an attack on Syracuse by some of her neighbours, but without success.

But now, in the sixteenth winter of the war, an expedition on a large scale, with the scarcely veiled design of a complete subjugation of the island, was proposed and debated at Athens. A deputation from

* IV. 59-65.

the town of Segestè, asking aid against Syracuse, and promising money for the war, furnished the pretext. But the real object of its chief promoters, among whom Alcibiades stood foremost, was the extension of their foreign dominion—it might be, not only to Sicily but to Carthage. It was determined to send a fleet of sixty galleys under Alcibiades, Nicias, and Lamachus, not only to succour their Ionian allies, but with the wide instructions "to do what seemed best for Athenian interests in Sicily." Few of the Athenians, as their historian admits, knew much about the extent and resources of the island, or were aware "that they were undertaking a war of hardly less proportions than that against the Peloponnesians." But one man at least in Athens had a true conception of the magnitude of the risk. This was Nicias, appointed to the command, we are told, "against his will." Prudent and cautious—his opponents called him over-cautious—perhaps of a somewhat despondent temperament for an Athenian, but of sterling honesty of purpose and undoubted personal courage, he took upon himself to set before his countrymen the unpopular side of the question. In an Assembly summoned for the purpose of voting the necessary supplies for the expedition, he raised afresh the whole question of the expedition itself.

He begins by confessing that he knew the temper of his fellow-citizens too well to entertain any hope of persuading them "not to risk the secure enjoyment of the present in grasping at a visionary future;" but he would try to show them that, in this case, at any rate, the risks were too grave. With so many subject-allies,

in Thrace and elsewhere, already wavering in their allegiance—with Sparta burning to revenge her late disaster—with an exchequer and a population greatly in need of recruiting,—they were going to take up the burden of a new and distant war. While they were leaving active enemies behind in Greece, they were going to tempt new ones to cross the sea against them. Even if they conquered Sicily, they could not retain it. Then he turns and makes a personal attack on Alcibiades, who probably was sitting close by, and who had been from the first one of the loudest advocates of the enterprise—an attack strangely bitter and vehement, when we consider they were to go out in joint command of the expeditionary forces :—

"If there be any one here who, elated at being appointed to a command, is urging you to set sail, looking to his own interest only,—especially as being somewhat young for such high office,—in the hope of winning admiration for his stud of horses and chariots, and of recouping himself somewhat for an extravagant expenditure out of the profits of his appointment, do not give him the opportunity of making a brilliant personal figure at the cost of national peril; but be assured that such men not only waste their own substance, but wrong the state; and that this business is a weighty one, and no fit matter for a youngster either to discuss in council or to be so hasty to take in hand. I have grave fears when I see those who sit there by his side and cheer his sentiments; and I appeal in my turn to the elder citizens among you, if any of you

chance to be sitting next to the men I mean, not to be shamed out of your opinion, nor fear to be thought cowards because you will not vote for war, nor be seized, like them, with a mad passion for far-off possibilities; remembering that the lust of ambition rarely achieves success, while a thoughtful policy commonly does."—(VI. 12, 13.)

No wonder that Alcibiades, proud and impulsive, backed by the younger spirits of whom he was the admired leader, and confident that he carried the popular feeling with him in favour of the enterprise, turned round upon his older and more cautious colleague with a haughty and contemptuous frankness. He was young, he confessed: men called him extravagant in his expenditure. But youth had its place in the state as well as old age. The very magnificence of his late display at the Olympic games had tended to the honour not only of his ancestors and himself, but of his country:—

"Seven chariots did I enter—a number which no private individual ever reached before—and I won the crown, and was second and fourth besides, and entertained liberally in every way, as such a triumph deserved. To such things honour attaches, by common consent; but they also give an impression of power by their performance. So, again, whenever I make a gallant show in my office of Choragus * at home, it

* Certain public offices at Athens—notably the furnishing the Chorus for the drama and equipping the war-galleys—were

may raise envy in my fellow-citizens, very naturally; but in the eyes of foreigners this also implies strength. And this folly that they charge me with is not without its use, when a man by his private expenditure raises not himself only to distinction, but his country. Nor is it unfair that those who have high aspirations should hold themselves above the ordinary level, since the less fortunate find none who claim to stand on their level in their distress. If we are none of us courted in adversity, let us lay our account to be slighted by those in prosperity; or else behave to all alike, and then claim the like treatment from others. I know, however, that men like myself, and all who outshine others in splendour of life, are objects of jealousy in their own day, to their equals especially, and also to the general public among whom they live. But none the less, they leave future generations eager to claim kindred with them, even where no such claim exists; while their country makes its boast of them, as no aliens or misdoers, but as her own genuine children, and children who have done gallant deeds." —(VI. 16.)

He scoffs at the idea of any effectual resistance on the part of the Sicilians—"a mixed rabble, distracted by faction in every town, and eager for change." He protests against refusing aid to an ally merely because he is distant and apparently unprofitable. Such never

discharged by the richest citizens at their own expense; and they sometimes vied with each other in their liberal expenditure on such occasions.

had been — such never should be — the policy of Athens.

Nicias made one more attempt to dissuade his countrymen from the enterprise, by representing to the Assembly the large scale on which preparations would have to be made. An overwhelming naval force, a strong body of heavy and light armed infantry, archers and slingers, plentiful supplies both of corn and of money, all must be provided as for those who would have to maintain themselves, from the first, in an enemy's country. If he was thought to be requiring too much, he would readily resign his command. The only reply was to bid him name his wants. A hundred three-banked war-galleys, 5000 heavy infantry, and light troops in proportion, were voted at once, and full powers given to the three generals who were to go out in command:—

"An eager longing for this expedition had fallen upon all alike. The elder thought they must surely conquer those against whom they were sailing, or that so large an armament could at least meet with no disaster. Those who were yet young were longing to see and explore a foreign country, and sanguine of coming home again safe. The mass of the people, and the soldiery, thought they should make money for the immediate present, and gain an accession of dominion which would supply a never-failing fund for pay. So that, owing to the intense eagerness of the majority, any man who did not regard the enterprise with favour held his peace, for fear lest, if he voted

against it, he should be reckoned disaffected to the state."—(VI. 24.)

So, at dawn on a midsummer day, the Athenians and their allies went on board their galleys in the harbour of the Piræus. It was the most splendidly equipped force, though not the largest, which ever went out of a Greek city. The captains had vied with each other in the liberality with which they armed and manned their galleys. It was the most distant expedition, too, which Athens had undertaken, and with the most ambitious hopes. The historian, concise and unimpassioned almost to a fault on most occasions, here warms into vivid description:—

"The whole population of the city, one might say, natives and sojourners alike, went down in a body to accompany them, the citizens escorting each their own immediate friends,—some their comrades, some their kinsmen, others their sons,—with mingled hopes and lamentations; hopes of new acquisitions abroad, lamentations as for those they might never see again, remembering on what a long voyage from their native country they were setting forth; and at this moment, when they were on the point of taking leave of each other with all the perils before them, the darker view was more present to them than when they had voted for the expedition. Yet nevertheless they took courage when they saw their actual strength, from the completeness of the force in every detail. The foreigners and the general crowd had come as to

a spectacle, to look upon an armament well worth seeing, and even surpassing belief.

. . . . . .

"Now when the crews had embarked, and everything was got on board which they were to take with them, silence was proclaimed by sound of trumpet, and they offered the stated prayers before putting to sea, not separately ship by ship, but all together, at the leading of a herald; and they mixed bowls of wine throughout the whole force, officers and men pouring libations from gold and silver cups. And the whole multitude on shore joined in the prayers, both citizens and all who were present, and wished them good speed. And when they had sung their hymn to Apollo, and finished their libations, they cast off their moorings and sailed out in line at first, and then raced each with the other as far as Ægina, and so made haste to reach Corcyra, where the rest of the allied forces were assembling."—(VI. 30, 32.)

The Syracusans were for some time unwilling to believe the reports which reached them of the sailing of the expedition. At a general congress held to deliberate on the question, Hermocrates again put before his countrymen the imminence of the danger, and the necessity for union among themselves. He professed to have received accurate information of the Athenian movements, and had no doubt as to their real designs. They were coming, not to aid their allies, but to conquer Sicily. He advised that an appeal for aid should be made to the Greek towns

on the coast of Italy, to Lacedæmon, to Corinth, and even to Carthage, whose own interests might be in danger. Above all, let them man a fleet at once, meet the Athenians off Tarentum on their way, and dispute the passage of the Gulf.

This counsel was strongly opposed by Athenagoras, the leader of the democratical party—the Cleon of Syracuse. The Athenians would not come, he said; it was only a report spread by a faction for their own purposes, to raise themselves to power. If they did come, Syracuse would prove more than a match for them: he doubted whether they would even succeed in effecting a landing on the island. Syracuse stood much more in danger from oligarchs at home than from the Athenians.

News reached Syracuse at last that the armada, swelled by the junction of the allies to a hundred and thirty-four war-galleys, and accompanied by five hundred smaller craft, had actually reached the coast of Italy, and serious preparations were made for defence. The Athenians had already met with some discouragement. The colonists at Rhegium, on whose aid they had depended, had refused to join them; and it was found that the citizens of Segestè, who had offered to defray the expense of the expedition, were in no position to do so. The commanders of the force were divided in opinion. Nicias advised that they should confine their operations to Selinus, and then return. Alcibiades was for opening negotiations with all the towns except Selinus and Syracuse, and then, in conjunction with such native allies as they could

thus obtain, attacking Syracuse, unless it would agree to their terms. Lamachus, with a soldier-like directness which was in accordance with his general character, urged the bolder course of an immediate descent on Syracuse, while the alarm in the city was fresh, and before they had time to make preparation: a first successful blow, he said, would soon win them allies in the island.

The plan of Alcibiades was adopted; but he was not to do much himself towards carrying it out. A state-galley had been sent out from Athens to carry him home as a prisoner, on a charge of sacrilege. It had been hanging over his head when the expedition sailed, and he had asked to be at once put upon his trial. But his enemies feared his popularity at the moment, and hoped to complete their evidence against him more easily in his absence. The little square stone pillars bearing the head of Hermes (Mercury), the genius of social and political life, which were set up in the street-corners and other places in Athens, were discovered to have been all mutilated during one night. The excitement at Athens was profound. It was, says Grote, as though "all the images of the Virgin had been defaced during the same night in a Spanish or Italian town." Rewards were offered for the discovery of the perpetrators, and information was given by slaves of its having been a drunken frolic of certain young citizens of rank, of whom Alcibiades was said to have been the ringleader. He and his friends were also now accused of having held a mock celebration in private houses of the awful Eleusinian mysteries.

These acts were supposed to be in some way connected with a conspiracy against the democratic constitution, though it is not easy to understand how. Alcibiades was allowed to return to Athens in his own galley, to avoid the odium and possible danger of the public arrest of so popular an officer. He landed at Thurii on the way, gave his escort the slip, crossed in a boat to the Peloponnese, and went straight to Lacedæmon. Sentence of death was passed against him by default in the Assembly at Athens; but, in recalling him, they had taken the life out of the expedition; and they left the chief control of it in the hands of a commander who, however high his personal character, had from the first no sympathy with its objects, and no faith in its success.

Nicias and Lamachus now divided the fleet into two squadrons, and undertook some operations against a few of the coast-towns with indifferent success. The Syracusans grew bold, and determined on taking the offensive. Acting on information from a native who was really in the interest of the Athenians, they marched out in force to attack their position at Catana. The Athenians meanwhile re-embarked their forces, set sail by night, and, entering the Great Harbour of Syracuse, effected a landing close to the city itself, and fortified their position. They repulsed an attack made on them by the Syracusans, inflicting on them considerable loss. But the enemy was too strong in cavalry to allow them to push their advantage, and they withdrew to winter quarters in the harbours of Catana and Naxos, the only two settlements where

they had secured a favourable reception. The Syracusans employed the interval in strengthening the defences of their city; and both parties sought alliances both in the towns of Sicily and on the Italian coast. In one of these towns, Camarina, the Athenian envoy was met in the public assembly by Hermocrates, who had been sent there on the part of Syracuse. The latter urged his old argument, that this was not really the cause of Syracuse, but of all Sicily; if Syracuse were allowed to fall, it would be too late for any town in the island to resist the ambitious designs of Athens. The Athenian retorts the charge against Syracuse: he asserts that her object is to make use of others to repel the attack of Athens, only in order to make herself sovereign in the island when the Athenian fleet was gone; and he warns his hearers that the ambition of a neighbour at home was far more to be dreaded than that of a foreign state beyond sea.

The Syracusans sent embassies also to Corinth and to Sparta. At the latter place their appeal was supported by Alcibiades, now exasperated into bitterness against his own city and people. He is represented as making a clever speech there in apology for his new position; but Thucydides fails, as might be expected, to make out a good case for his renegade countryman. He makes Alcibiades endeavour to explain that a democrat at Athens meant one who was opposed to tyrants —whom the Spartans, oligarchical though their constitution was, held equally in abhorrence. Besides, he had been a democrat at Athens because the constitution was democratic; though, he says, "all we who

have any sense know what a democracy is, and no one better than myself, who could find it in my heart to abuse it heartily, only that nothing new can be said of a confessed absurdity." In fact, he protests he had been banished from Athens because he was not good democrat enough. The real aim of Athens in fitting out her armada (and he spoke, he said, as one who knew) was to subjugate Sicily first, then the Greek colonies on the coast of Italy, then Carthage, and then, with a gathered force from every quarter, Greek and barbarian, to attempt the conquest of the whole Peloponnese. He advised the Lacedæmonians by all means to send a body of their heavy infantry to Sicily, and above all, a Spartan general to organise the Syracusan forces; and at the same time to occupy Deceleia, a strong position fifteen miles from Athens, whence its communications and supplies could most readily be intercepted. He concludes as follows:—

"And I claim that none of you should think the worse of me because, after having seemed hitherto a lover of my country, I now act with all my energies against her in conjunction with her bitterest enemies, or distrust my suggestions as merely the zealous malice of a banished man. I am an exile—true: I have put myself beyond the power of their malice—not beyond the power of aiding you, if you will listen to me. And a man's worst enemies are not those who attack him in fair warfare, like you, but those who compel their friends to become their enemies. Loyalty I hold to be really due, not to the city which treats me with

injustice, but to that in which I once had my constitutional rights secured to me. Nor do I count that country now my fatherland which I am acting against; rather, I am preparing to reclaim a fatherland which is mine no longer. The true patriot is not he who shrinks from attacking his native land when he has been unjustly driven from it, but he who, out of his ardent longing for it, tries every means to regain it. I ask you, then, Lacedæmonians, to make use of me fearlessly, for whatever perilous service or hard work you will; remembering the argument so common in the mouths of all men, that if I have done you grievous harm as an enemy, I can surely do you important service as a friend."—(VI. 92.)

The accession to the Lacedæmonian interests of the renegade Athenian was of great importance to the result of the struggle. His advice was at once followed. A Spartan officer, Gylippus, was straightway despatched to Syracuse to organise their army, with promise of ships and soldiers to follow in the spring. A fortress was built on Deceleia, and its effects upon Athens were harassing in the extreme. Its occupation by the enemy lasted until the termination of the war, and the people of Attica suffered all the evils of a perpetual invasion.

Early in the following summer the Athenians had got together a tolerably efficient cavalry force, mounted on native horses, which made them more a match for their enemies in that particular arm; and they commenced operations afresh against Syracuse. Their

fleet took up a position in the harbour of Thapsus, a small peninsula, which they fortified with a stockade. Above the city of Syracuse was a steep range of hill called Epipolæ (as "overhanging the town"), and of this it was necessary for the besiegers to get possession, in order to carry out their design of building lines of circumvallation—the usual process in a regular siege—while a strict blockade was to be maintained by sea. The Syracusans were well aware of the value of this position, and were taking measures to secure it, when the Athenians carried it by surprise, defeating the enemy, who hurried in disorder to defend it, with considerable loss. They began their investing works at once, drawing the line across from the Great Harbour to the smaller one at Trogilus. A cross wall, to cut this line, was commenced on the part of the enemy; it was destroyed by the Athenians: they began a second. In the course of these counter-operations, attacks were made upon the Athenian lines, and repulsed,—not without some loss on their side, however. In one of these engagements, Lamachus, hurrying to the support of the right wing of the Athenians, which had been driven in, got too far in advance, and was cut off with a few of his men, and killed. His body was carried off by the enemy, but restored after their defeat under the usual truce. It is disappointing to find the death of so gallant an officer related in the fewest and coldest words. The loss to the Athenians at this juncture of a commander whose voice in council had been given, as has been seen, in favour of a bolder course of action, must have been greater than

the historian shows. We know little of his character beyond the scanty notices in this history; but in the burlesques of Aristophanes he figures as the rough but honest soldier, of small means and homely manners, and a fair subject for a joke on those points, but the thorough "man of war from his youth," who braves all hardships, and is never so much at home as when in camp. Plutarch strongly confirms this view of his character.

The Athenians had now secured the slopes of Epipolæ, while their fleet held possession of the Great Harbour. The towns on the coast, and the native tribes in the interior, began to tender their allegiance to the successful invaders. The situation had become critical in the extreme for the Syracusans; and a party in the city had even opened communications with Nicias on the question of surrender. Nicias himself seems to have lost his old cautious and somewhat despondent temperament, and to have become confident and careless. He thought Syracuse lay at his feet.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DISASTER AT SYRACUSE.

It was about the month of August B.C. 414, when the actual siege of the city had been going on some five months, that Gylippus the Lacedæmonian arrived at Syracuse, with four galleys. After being delayed and wellnigh wrecked on his voyage, he had landed at the seaport of Himera, collected a force of native allies, and with them marched across country, and made his appearance on the heights of Epipolæ by some passes left unguarded in the rear of the Athenian position. He crossed their uncompleted line of circumvallation, and entered the city, escorted by the Syracusan army, who had come out to welcome him. By a negligence on the part of Nicias which seems unaccountable, no attempt appears to have been made to check either his march through the island or his entrance into the town.

It was only the news of his coming, which had reached Syracuse a few days before, that saved it from surrender. But from the moment of his arrival the confidence of the citizens was restored. It was not so much the relief which he brought or promised, as the

personal weight of the man, which gave them new spirit. He began by sending a herald to the Athenians to say that "he was prepared to make terms with them, if they were willing to quit Sicily within five days with all their belongings." We are not surprised to read that to such a proposal they vouchsafed no reply. But we imagine also its effect on the Syracusans, to whom the warlike reputation of the Spartans was well known. He next captured a fort which the Athenians had occupied, and put the garrison to the sword. But perhaps the point in his behaviour most calculated to instil respect and confidence in his new allies was, that when he was defeated in an action which took place between the works and counter-works, he had the courage to tell the Syracusans that "the fault was not theirs but his own, for having lost the advantage of the cavalry and javelin-men, by hampering himself too much between walls; but he would lead them to the attack again." They were Dorians, all of them, he said, and were not going to be beaten, surely, by those Ionians, and islanders, and mixed rabble of all sorts. And in the next battle he drove the Athenians within their lines, carried out the new counter-wall of defence beyond their works, and prevented them from ever completing their intended line of circumvallation.

Both sides stood in need of reinforcements. The Syracusans sent a further appeal for aid to Corinth and Lacedæmon; and Gylippus went in person through the towns of Sicily collecting such auxiliaries, naval and military, as he could. Nicias had fallen back

into his old despondency—indeed he had now perhaps sufficient cause—and he despatched a pitiable letter (which Thucydides probably gives *verbatim* from some public record) to the home authorities. The arrival of Gylippus, he said, had completely changed the situation. The Syracusans would soon be strongly reinforced. His army were obliged to give up their own works of circumvallation, and had become rather the besieged than the besiegers. Their ships were leaky, their crews daily diminishing — some even deserting. The expedition must either be recalled at once, or strongly reinforced. He himself was suffering from illness, and begged to be relieved of his command. There is much honest pathos, if some lack of dignity, in his personal appeal: "I think I have a right to claim this indulgence from you, for, so long as I had my health, I did you much good service in my command."

Either the Athenians had immense confidence in the high character of their general, or they must have concluded that his letter expressed only the natural dejection of ill health, and unwillingness to incur responsibilities. They refused to supersede him; but they associated two of his officers with him in the command, until Demosthenes and Eurymedon, who were to be sent out as soon as possible with new forces, should arrive at Syracuse. The latter officer (of Corcyræan notoriety) was despatched at once, though it was the middle of winter, with ten galleys and a supply of money.

But the Syracusans received their reinforcements

first—a picked body of armed Helots from Lacedæmon, and infantry from Bœotia, Corinth, and Sicyon. Gylippus, too, had returned to the city with what native auxiliaries he had been able to raise; and he now proceeded to adopt new and bolder tactics. All through the winter a Syracusan fleet had been carefully manned and regularly exercised; and he proposed at once to attack the Athenians where they had hitherto been supposed incontestably superior—by sea. In this he was ably seconded by Hermocrates, who maintained that this superiority rested on mere reputation, and, such as it was, had been but the result of circumstances which had compelled Athens to become a naval power instead of an inland one. The first attempt, however, resulted in a complete defeat of the new fleet in their attack on the Athenians in the Great Harbour; but in a simultaneous assault made by Gylippus by land upon the Athenian forts on Plemmyrium, he succeeded in driving them from that important position with considerable loss, and to their serious distress for the future, as it gave the Syracusans the command of the entrance of the harbour, and no supplies could now come in to the Athenians without a battle.

Nothing discouraged by their first defeat, the Syracusans prepared for a second trial of strength by sea. They knew that in the confined space within the harbour the usual Athenian tactics of sweeping round with their light and swift galleys and perfectly-trained oarsmen, and ramming the enemy on the broadside, could not well be carried out; and, acting under the

advice of a clever Corinthian, they strengthened the beaks of their own heavier vessels with under-beams, so as to give them the advantage in a direct charge, bow to bow. The first day's engagement was indecisive; but the Syracusans renewed the action after a day's interval, and gained a complete victory, sinking seven Athenian galleys, disabling many more, and inflicting on them very considerable loss in men killed and prisoners. The spirits of the besieged were raised to the highest point: they were confident that they had now established their superiority at sea, and they had little doubt of the result of future operations by land. The discouragement of the besiegers was proportionate, and their fortunes from that time practically hopeless.

Yet for the moment their hopes revived, when, a day or two after the battle, Demosthenes and Eurymedon (who had returned to meet his fellow-admiral) arrived from Athens with the expected reinforcements. It was an imposing force which entered the harbour —almost a second armada—seventy-three war-galleys, five thousand heavy infantry, with light troops of various nationalities in full proportion. Even the Syracusans were struck with a new dismay at this addition to the strength of the enemy. And Demosthenes determined at least not to imitate "the policy of Nicias, whose force had been so formidable on his first arrival, but who had allowed it to fall into contempt by wasting the winter at Catana, instead of attacking Syracuse at once."* He saw that the one

* VII. 42.

object, if the siege was to be carried to any successful issue, must be to capture and destroy the enemy's counter-work on Epipolæ. His attempts to take it by direct assault failed; and he then resolved upon a night attack in strong force by a circuitous route in its rear. The most difficult part of the enterprise had apparently succeeded; but then the troops seem to have lost their order and got into confusion: the battle-cries, where Greeks met Greeks, were not to be distinguished, and in the darkness and uproar friends were confounded with foes. The author honestly admits that he had been unable to gain from the actors on either side any clear account of the action; but in the end the Athenians were driven back down the hill. Many were forced over the cliffs, and many lost their way after the descent, and were cut off by the enemy's cavalry. The defeat was decisive, and thenceforth the Syracusans assumed the aggressive, and it became only a question of the Athenians holding their own.

A council of war was held, and Demosthenes urged a retreat while their fleet were yet masters of the seas; and in this he was supported by Eurymedon. Nicias opposed it; he was afraid of dispiriting his men; and he thought he had friends in the city who would yet arrange for its surrender. He did not urge these reasons publicly in the council. He argued that the Athenians would never forgive a retreat without orders from home. "He had no wish himself, knowing well, as he did, the temper of the Athenians, to die an unjust death at the hands of his countrymen on a charge of dishonour: he preferred to risk his fate, if so it

must be, at the hands of the enemy, so far as he was concerned."* The resources of Syracuse, he was assured from private information, were all but exhausted; and he maintained that they must carry on the siege.

In divided counsels there is no safety. Demosthenes and Eurymedon unwillingly gave way; the Syracusans received reinforcements both from the island and from the Peloponnese; and then, too late, Nicias ceased to oppose a general retreat. Secret orders were issued for the departure of the fleet; but an eclipse of the moon intervened, and Nicias—"for he was much given to superstitious scruples and such-like—declared that he would not now even discuss the question as to making any movement before they had waited thrice nine days, as the soothsayers enjoined."

The Syracusans had gained intelligence of the contemplated retreat, and at once made a combined attack on their enemies by land and sea. Their first attempt to storm the Athenian lines was not successful; but they completely defeated the Athenian fleet in the harbour, capturing eighteen of their galleys and killing all their crews. Eurymedon was among the slain. They were resolved to complete the destruction of their whole armament. With this view, they began to block up the mouth of the harbour with a close-packed line of merchant-vessels, while they prepared for another attack on the fleet within. The only hope for the Athenians now was to force the passage. Nicias addressed his crews, and again the captains individually, reminding them that not only their own lives,

* VII. 48.

but the fortunes of Athens, hung on the coming battle. Gylippus, on his part, called on the Syracusans to fight now, not only for the liberties of Sicily, but for vengeance on the invader.

Nicias gave the command of the fleet to Demosthenes, himself remaining at the head of the troops on shore. The fight in the harbour was long and obstinate. There were nearly two hundred galleys engaged in close action, and above half of them were left mere wrecks; but the result was another decisive victory for the Syracusans. The Athenians had provided grappling-irons, by means of which they laid their own galleys aboard the enemy's, and reduced the struggle to a combat hand-to-hand. But it may well be doubted whether this was not in their enemy's favour, as they would thus lose all the advantage of their own nautical skill. The historian has given a description of the battle at greater length and with more picturesque detail than is usual with him. The struggle took place in full view of the troops on both sides, who lined the shores of the harbour, and their interest in it is vividly described. It is possible that the writer was himself a spectator:—

"The troops on either side who looked on from shore, while the sea-fight was thus equally balanced, shared largely, so far as their feelings were concerned, in the struggle and the conflict; the native forces eager now for increase of glory, the invaders dreading lest they should meet with a worse disaster than they had already. . . . When any of them saw their own

men victorious in any quarter, they were of good cheer, and fell to invoking heaven not to disappoint them of success; while those who beheld their friends getting the worst of it mingled their shouts with lamentations, and, because they could see all that happened, were more depressed in spirit than those actually engaged. Others, who had a view of some hardly-contested scene of the fight, went through the greatest distress, owing to the prolonged suspense of the struggle, and in their extreme anxiety made contortions of their bodies corresponding to their feelings,—for they were always within a little, as it seemed, either of escape or destruction. So, in that one and the same body of Athenians, so long as the fight at sea was equally balanced, might be heard all at once loud lamentations and shouts of triumph—'They are winning!' 'They are beaten!'—and all the varied utterances which would be forced from a great army under great peril."—(VII. 71.)

So utterly overwhelmed and demoralised were the Athenians by this last defeat, that they had thought of retreating by night, without even asking the usual permission to bury their dead. Demosthenes, indeed, would have made one more attempt to force the passage out next morning with the remaining ships; but the men would not hear of it.

They began their retreat by land, 40,000 men who were in a condition to march; leaving their dead, their sick, and their wounded behind, burning such of their galleys as they could, and abandoning the remainder to the Syracusans. "The account of the

retreat," says Macaulay, "is among narratives what Vandyck's Lord Strafford is among paintings."

"A terrible scene it was, not only from the one great fact that they were going off with the sacrifice of all their ships, and, instead of all their high hopes, in imminent peril for themselves and for their country; but in the act of breaking up their quarters there occurred circumstances grievous alike to their sight and their feelings individually. For they were leaving their dead unburied, and when any man saw one of his personal friends lying among them, he was seized at once with grief and with dread: while those who were being left behind alive, wounded or sick, were a far sadder sight than even the dead for the living to look upon, and more to be pitied than those who had been slain. For these, breaking out into entreaties and lamentations, drove their friends almost to distraction by conjuring them to take them with them; appealing to each one by name, if they caught sight of a friend or a relative, hanging on their mess-comrades as they were moving off, and following them as far as they could; and when their strength or their limbs failed, not resigning themselves to being left behind without repeated adjurations and many groans. So that the whole force, reduced to weeping and in this sore distraction, had much work to get away at all, though they were quitting an enemy's country, after sufferings too great for tears, and in dread of suffering yet more in the unseen future. Great, too, was the general dejection and lack of confidence in themselves; for they

resembled nothing so much as the population of a city that has been starved out and has to be evacuated. . . . It was the heaviest reverse that had ever happened to a Greek army: it had fallen to men who came to make slaves of others to have to retreat for fear lest such lot should rather be their own. Instead of the prayers and hymns of triumph with which they had set sail, they had now to leave their quarters under omens the very reverse, moving by land instead of by sea, and having to trust to their arms and not their ships. Yet still, in view of the magnitude of the peril which yet hung over them, all this seemed to them endurable enough."—(VII. 75.)

Nicias made his last address to his broken force, as he passed along their lines, in a firm voice, and as cheerfully as he might. He bade them hope still, and, above all things, not lose their self-respect.

"For my own part—there is no one of you who is not at least as strong as I am (you can see to what a state I am reduced by disease), and though I have as much to make life valuable to me, privately and publicly, as any man, yet here I am, exposed to the same danger as the meanest soldier; yet I have done much to live a god-fearing life, and to act justly and be without reproach among men. And therefore have I yet confident hope for the future, and these misfortunes do not appal me so much as they well might. . . . Look, too, what stout soldiers, and in what goodly numbers, march in your ranks, and be not too much

disheartened: remember that wherever you take up your quarters, you will virtually form a city of yourselves, and that there is no place in Sicily that can either withstand your attack, or drive you out if once you occupy it. Take only good heed yourselves that your march be safe and orderly, each man reflecting that in the spot for which he may be forced to fight, he will find, if he is victorious, both a city and a fortress. . . .

"In brief, fellow-soldiers, make up your minds that you must needs put forth all your valour, since there is no refuge at hand to which you can escape if you turn cowards; while, if you now deliver yourselves from your enemies, all will regain the homes I know you long to see, and we Athenians shall build up again the mighty power of our native state, fallen though it may be now; for it is men that make a state, and not stone walls or empty galleys."—(VII. 77.)

The retreating army marched in a kind of hollow square, the camp-followers and baggage inside, harassed at every step by the enemy's horse, and galled by their archers. The first day they did not make five miles. The Syracusans had occupied beforehand the fords and passes. The Athenians gained some little ground by a stolen march the second night; but by the next mid-day the rear-guard under Demosthenes found themselves surrounded in an olive plantation, and laid down their arms on the promise that their lives should be spared. Nicias, with the advance, struggled on some

distance further, till they reached the little river Asinarius. There, rushing into the stream to quench their burning thirst, they fell into irretrievable confusion, and were butchered by thousands with scarcely an attempt at resistance. Nicias at length surrendered to Gylippus in person. Of the troops, some few made their escape and reached the friendly walls of Catana; some were carried off and made slaves by their individual captors; 7000 were carried to Syracuse as public spoil, and after a miserable imprisonment of about two months in the great stone-quarries there, exposed without shelter of any kind to burning sun and heavy rains, were sold as slaves: the Athenians and Sicilian Greeks were kept there some time longer.

The fate of the two commanders was a subject of some discussion. Gylippus would have carried them home with him in triumph to Lacedæmon. But the Syracusans would not even show this questionable mercy: they insisted on putting both to death. Thucydides thinks that the influential parties within the walls, who had been in communication with Nicias, feared that he might betray their secrets. The historian gives him a brief and cold epitaph. "He least of all the Greeks of my time deserved such a miserable fate, because of his consistent practice of every recognised moral virtue." * Yet it was better for him, per-

* There is another reading of the passage,—"consistent discharge of all religious duties;" on which Mr Grote has founded a sneering depreciation of Nicias as "such a respectable and religious man!"—(Hist. of Greece, V. 308.)

haps, than a return to Athens with the broken remains of that grand armament, to the failure of which his own incompetence had so largely contributed.

Great was the consternation at Athens, when by slow degrees the whole terrible truth began to be realised. They knew the full extent of their danger. The Syracusans might sail to the Piræus; their enemies at home would gather courage; the subject-islanders would seize the opportunity to revolt. But they no more lost heart than the Romans after Cannæ. They built a new fleet, and retrenched their expenses. The reserve of a thousand talents (some £240,000), which the foresight of Pericles had set aside at the commencement of the war for any season of emergency, was now called into use. But though Athens rallied thus gallantly, and maintained the struggle with varying success for eight years longer, she never fully recovered the blow which had been struck in Sicily. She had found her Moscow, says Thirlwall, in Syracuse.

And here, if completeness were desired, the history of Thucydides should conclude. The events chronicled in his eighth and last "book" (which he never finished) are of inferior interest to the Sicilian disaster, and were only preparatory to the end. The anticipated revolt amongst the subject-allies of Athens soon began. The important island of Chios was the first to throw off its allegiance, supported by a Peloponnesian fleet: the Ionian town of Miletus followed, and the islands of Teos, Lesbos, Rhodes, and later on, Eubœa. An alliance was concluded for the first time between the Lacedæmonians and the court of Persia, from which,

however, they reaped no material benefit; for the king had his own interests chiefly in view, and Tissaphernes, the satrap who managed Persian affairs in those quarters, speedily disagreed with his new friends.

The intrigues of Alcibiades, restless in his exile, mistrusted by the Spartans in spite of all his ability, contributed largely to the quarrel. He was endeavouring to bring about his own restoration to Athens under a change of government. "He had taken measures," says Thucydides, "through some powerful friends, to have it mentioned in good society that he should be glad to come back—but under an oligarchy, not under the rascal democracy who had driven him out—and to resume his position as a citizen, after giving them Tissaphernes for a friend." The plot was first concocted in the Athenian camp at Samos, and the temptation of making an ally of the Great King, who could have no possible dealings with a democracy, and whose pecuniary aid would be so valuable, proved strong enough, combined with the influence of the oligarchical clubs, to effect a revolution at Athens. The old democratic constitution—it had existed, the author remarks, a hundred years exactly—was overthrown, and an oligarchy of Four Hundred seized the government. Among the leaders of this movement was Antiphon the rhetorician, said to have been Thucydides's teacher. But it was not by this party, after all, that Alcibiades was recalled. They found that he did not possess the influence of which he had boasted with the Persian; and they suspected, not unjustly, that he was at heart no true partisan of any cause but his own private in-

terests. The army and the fleet had continued stanch to the cause of democracy, and swore at Samos a solemn oath to maintain it. Generals were elected by public vote, in whom they could have full confidence. "We must not lose heart," said one of them, Thrasybulus, "because the city has revolted from us." But the strangest circumstance was, that Alcibiades gave in his adhesion to them, and was taken into their confidence. He was restored to his country by the formal vote of a self-constituted Assembly held by the troops at Samos; for they regarded Athens, under her new oligarchical rulers, as no longer the seat of any lawful authority. Within a few months the government of the Four Hundred was overthrown there, and the democracy in all essentials restored. Antiphon and others of his fellow-revolutionists were brought to trial, and condemned, in accordance with the Athenian law of treason, to drink the hemlock-juice. A Lacedæmonian fleet with which, as Thucydides admits, Antiphon and his party had held treasonable communications, was hovering off the Piræus; and had they known how to use their opportunity, the fall of Athens might have taken place six years earlier than it did.

Restored to all his rights, Alcibiades was at once elected one of the Athenian generals. He did not revisit his native city for some years; but under his leading, and that of Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus, the Athenian fleet won a victory at Kynos-sêma on the Hellespont, over the Peloponnesian confederates, including a squadron from their old enemy Syracuse

(B.C. 411). It was a success not so decisive or important in itself, as in the effect it had for the time on the drooping spirit of Athens. With this event, in the twenty-first year of the war, the author's unfinished history concludes.

More than once before the war was ended, Athens had her gleams of triumph and her chances of at least an honourable peace. When the Lacedæmonian admiral, Mindarus, was killed, and his whole fleet captured, in the fight at Cyzicus, negotiations were proposed by the enemy, and in the flush of triumph refused. Overtures are said to have been again made by Lacedæmon after the second great naval victory of the Athenians at the Arginusæ islands, and to have been in like manner rejected. But the tide of success soon turned. Athens dismissed from his command, and drove again into exile, the man whom, with all his faults, she could least spare at this juncture—Alcibiades. He had not always been successful: he had still bitter personal enemies, and his relations with the Persian satraps were a continual ground of suspicion. She adjudged to death, for what was at worst but an error of judgment, the commanders who had conquered for her at Arginusæ; and she was worse served by those who (in spite of the generous warning of the exiled Alcibiades against the insecurity of the station) lost her navy in the crowning disaster at the Goats' River (Aigos-potami). She had to surrender to

Lysander on almost his own terms; and while her bitterest enemies looked on, crowned with garlands as at a holiday, her Long Walls, her pride and defence, were pulled down to the sound of the Lacedæmonian fifes. It was only the forbearance of her great rival that prevented her utter obliteration as a power in Greece.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

CLOSELY as Thucydides may be said to have approached to the spirit of modern history, there are points where the difference strikes the reader forcibly enough. He scarcely ever vouchsafes us even a glimpse of the Athens or Sparta of his day, except so far as their foreign politics are concerned—that is, their relations with each other and the neighbouring states in the way of treaties and alliances, in operations by land and sea, in the struggle for dominion and the resistance it entails. We see nothing of the great Pericles except as the leading spirit of the war,—the commander of the Athenian forces, or the orator who defends its policy. Of the internal state of Athens we gain from his history no information at all. The description of the great pestilence might be taken as an exception, but that he plainly regards it chiefly as an important episode in the war. We should have known nothing from his pages of the influence over the Athenian commons of men like Cleon, if the capture of Sphakteria and the fate of the Mityleneans had not brought this influence into the foreground.

Yet perhaps even what we are inclined to notice as

a defect may be the consistency of art, which is not unfrequently too cold and severe for popular criticism. Thucydides set out by professing himself the historian of the war between the confederacies of Athens and Sparta, and he has confined himself to his subject with a unity of purpose, and perhaps some amount of self-denial, which has not always been appreciated. It is true that we learn from him nothing of the social and domestic life of his countrymen at a most interesting period: we gain more real information on this point from the burlesques of Aristophanes or the Dialogues of Plato. On the art, the science, the literature of the times, he is absolutely silent. He has no "supplementary chapters" on these subjects, like his modern successors, in which the progress and development of a nation in these respects is kept on parallel lines, as it were, with its growth or decadence in strength, in territory, in the achievements of war. The only poet he quotes is Homer, and then rather as historian than as bard; we should not know from his pages that the drama, then in its highest development, was a main feature in Athenian life: he mentions the noblest work of Pheidias—the statue of Athenè in the Parthenon—only to calculate the amount of gold on it which Pericles thought might be available in a national emergency.* Much as we may regret these omissions, the historian would perhaps have defended them, as being outside the subject he had proposed to himself and to his readers: he had promised us not a history of Athens, but a history of the war.

The same explanation may not unfairly be suggested

* II. 13.

of a charge which has been brought against him of an apparent indifference to human suffering. The cold-blooded massacres perpetrated by both parties in this war are related by him without any attempt at palliation, and at the same time without any expression of horror. Even the sufferings of the Athenian citizens after the great disaster in Sicily do not affect the calm current of his narrative: and he leaves the wretched captives in the Syracusan stone-quarries without even satisfying the reader whether the majority of them perished there or not. But such was the merciless character of warfare even amongst the highly civilised Greeks: and his is a military history, and not a moral discourse.

Another characteristic feature in which the work of Thucydides presents a remarkable contrast to the style of modern historians has already been partly noticed. The long and elaborate speeches which he introduces from time to time form almost a distinct literary production. They do not rise from the narrative, but are fitted into it. So involved and difficult in their language and construction that Cicero pronounced them wellnigh unintelligible, they often serve rather as obstructions in the reader's course than as aids to his realisation of the story. The young student of Thucydides is sometimes recommended to pass them over in his first reading, and confine himself to the actual history. But they serve, no doubt, a definite purpose of their own. They are essays on the political questions of the times; they give the author's view of the motives which actuated the leaders of the several states engaged in the great war. They form, in fact, the philosophy

of the history as distinct from the facts. They may have represented here and there the substance of the argument—in some few cases even of the language—actually used by the speakers named: they reflect sometimes—notably in the case of Cleon and Diodotus—the divided voice of public opinion; but we are more certain to find in them the view in which the great question of the hour presented itself to the historian himself. Whether the speaker be Athenian, Corinthian, or Syracusan, the voice and language are still those of Thucydides. A remarkable language it is; reminding us now of the involved periods of St Paul, and now of the speeches of Cromwell, in which the expression vainly struggles with the thought. The style is evidently moulded on that of the professional rhetoricians to whom the Athenians loved to listen; and the author addresses himself to both sides of the argument with all the ability of a practised advocate. If it had not been that the interest of a great war called forth his powers as a historian, Thucydides might have filled the chair of his teacher Antiphon, instead of recording his fate.

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